DECEMBER THE FOURTEENTH

DMITRI MÆREZHKOVSKY

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DECEMBER THE FOURTEENTH

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December the Fourteenth

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December the Fourteenth

by Dmitri S. Merezhkovsky *Translated from the Russian by* Nathalie A. Duddington

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NOTE

At the Publisher's request, the translator has somewhat reduced "The Fourteenth of December" in length

SEP 25 1923

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M541 7d

Printed in Great Britain by Butler & Tanner, *Frome and London*

126198

Book One

The Fourteenth

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Part One

I

"TO love the earth is a sin ; one ought to love heavenly things. But I cannot—I love our Birdcherrylands more than anything in the world. While I lived there I did not know I loved the place so much—but now that I have left, I love and miss it dreadfully."

"You love your land as though it were a living thing, don't you, Marya Pavlovna ? "

"Why, of course it is living ! I used to run out into the copse—young birches stood there, thin like wax tapers, their bark so soft and tender and warm with the sun that it seemed quite alive. I would fling my arms round a tree, press my cheek against it, kiss it, and say, 'My darling, my own, my little sister ! ' "

In the bluish winter twilight that filtered through the frozen window of the coach, Prince Valeryan Mihailovitch Golitsin thought as he looked into the girl's charming face : "You are like a birch-tree in spring yourself."

To look at, Marya Pavlovna Tolychev was a typical provincial young lady, one of those of whom it is said :

> "Her leisure hours were divided
> Between the spinet and the embroidery frame."

She was well-bred and spoke French ; but her face was like the face of a peasant girl who sits by the window with a yellow red-spotted kerchief on her head, eating sunflower seeds and laughing with the village lads.

Perhaps she loved no one as yet, but she was bathed in the fragrance of love as the lilac in the dewy freshness of morning.

On the way from South Russia to Petersburg, Golitsin stopped in Moscow to see a member of the Secret Society, Ivan Ivanovitch Pushchin.[1] Pushchin served in the Moscow Criminal Court and lived with his aunt in her big old-fashioned house in a quiet part of Moscow. A distant relative of the Pushchins, Nina Lvovna Tolychev, and her nineteen-year-old daughter, Marya Pavlovna, were staying there also on their way to Petersburg from their estate in the Serpuhov district. At Pushchin's request Golitsin consented to accompany them.

A stage-coach had at that time just been started between Moscow and Petersburg ; it was a long, low, leather-covered vehicle with one window in front and one behind. One could not lie down in it : four people, divided by a partition, sat back to back, two facing the way the coach went and two looking behind. Golitsin set out with the two ladies and their maid Palashka in such a coach.

Madame Tolychev came from a well-to-do family, and, like all gentlefolk, was used to travelling in a leisurely way with her own carriage and horses, taking her ikons, her kitchen, and a whole train of servants and household luggage. She was afraid of stage-coaches as of an unheard-of novelty, and was glad of a reliable travelling companion.

She told him at once all about herself. After her husband's death she was left alone with a little daughter. The estate was doing badly ; she herself knew nothing of farming, and the steward was a rogue. The estate was mortgaged for 25,000 roubles, and they had no money to pay the interest. It would be sold by auction, and then they would become beggars.

But the Lord had pity on them, and sent them a good

[1] An intimate friend of the great poet, Alexander Pushkin.—*Translator's note.*

man. There came from Petersburg to Serpuhov to stay with his relations a Mr. Akvilonov, a state councillor, saw Márinka at a dance and was so fascinated by her that a few days later he proposed to her. He was no longer young—over fifty—but respectable, well-meaning, highly thought of by his superiors and said to have a lot of money. He was devoted to Márinka. "If you will make me happy and consent," said he, "I will sacrifice everything to your daughter's happiness. I will retire from the service, settle at Birdcherrylands, will look after things and put your affairs right." Márinka did not refuse him, but asked for time to think it over. Nina Lvovna did not press her daughter; she knew, of course, that young people dream of marrying for love. Akvilonov was no match for her—he was old enough to be her father. Márinka had been thinking for a whole year, but at last they received a letter from Mr. Akvilonov, respectfully begging them to decide his fate, and, if they could give him the least hope, to come to Petersburg for a personal interview. Nina Lvovna had to go there anyway, about the estate, for the interest had not been paid and the place might be sold.

They also rested some hope on their great-aunt, Natalya Kirillovna Rzhevsky. The old lady was rich but stingy and capricious; she had taken it into her head that they must sell the estate and come to live with her in Petersburg, and there was no moving her. "If you don't, you shall not get a penny from me," she said. And Márinka would not hear of it. "I would rather marry Akvilonov," she said, "than leave Birdcherrylands. There I was born and there I will die."

Nina Lvovna wept as she finished her story. Much as she praised the suitor, she was sorry for her daughter.

DECEMBER THE FOURTEENTH

During the night Golitsin sat in his compartment with Palashka and in the daytime with Nina Lvovna. But on the second day she had a bad headache, and, to enable her to rest in a half-reclining position, Palashka was put on the box with the postilion and Marya Pavlovna came to sit with Golitsin.

The coach crawled along like a tortoise. There was not yet enough snow for sledges to go properly ; the runners scraped on the bare stones ; the carriage lurched. Behind the partition Nina Lvovna could be heard breathing in her sleep. The bells tinkled drowsily. The bluish twilight of evening, like the light one sees in dreams, showed dark through the frozen window. And it seemed to them both that they were dreaming an old familiar dream of long ago.

"Do you know, Marya Pavlovna, I keep fancying that we have met before. Only I can't think when," said Golitsin, still looking into the girl's charming face.

"I too . . ." she said, and broke off.

"What?"

"No, nothing. Something silly." She flushed and turned away. She blushed easily, like a little girl, with a deep sudden flush that overspread her cheeks and made her look more charming than ever. Bending towards the window, she moved her delicate rosy finger along the pattern made by the frost.

She watched Golitsin intently when he was not looking and his face kept strangely changing, as it were, doubling before her eyes. Now it was hard, dry, bitter, with an unkind, ironical wrinkle near the mouth and a fixed, piercingly intelligent look in the eyes behind the dimly lustrous glass of the spectacles. Márinka disliked spectacles, and fancied that only old men and learned Germans wore them. That face was alien to her and

almost frightened her ; but all of a sudden it became quite simple, childish, charming and so piteous that her heart shrank within her, as though feeling that disaster and mortal danger threatened this man. But all this was dark and confused as in a prophetic dream.

" I am a little afraid of you, you know," she said, scrutinizing him stealthily as before. " How can I tell, perhaps you are as ready to make fun of one as Ivan Ivanovitch ? "

" Pushchin is very kind, there is no need to be afraid of him. Nor of me either."

" Are you kind, too ? "

" What do you think, Márinka . . . Marya Pavlovna ? "

" It's all right, every one calls me Márinka. I don't myself like Marya Pavlovna." She looked straight into his eyes and smiled; he smiled also. They looked at one another smiling and saying nothing, both conscious that this smile was drawing them together in awed and joyful intimacy that grew irresistibly. It was as though they remembered and recognized each other after a long long parting.

Suddenly she turned away again, flushed and looked down. But through her long drooping eyelashes he caught a glimpse of a shy caress—meant, perhaps, not for him, nor for anyone in particular, but for every one: so a sunbeam equally caresses everything upon which it falls.

" You must excuse me, prince," she said, still without raising her eyes. " I am awfully uncivilized. I have always been by myself at Birdcherrylands and have grown to be like a wild creature. I don't know how to talk to people. I am afraid of all sorts of things."

" It isn't worth while being afraid of people, Márinka; if you are afraid of them, you spoil them."

"But it isn't of people I am afraid; I don't myself know what it is I fear. At Birdcherrylands I was not afraid, I was ever so brave, but since I came away, everything seems suddenly so strange, so terrible. When I was little my nurse would tuck me in bed, make the sign of the cross over me, pull the bed curtains to and say 'Sleep, my child, God be with you. Don't open your eyes, don't peep from behind the curtain or Ho will seize you—there it is lying under your little bed.' And since then I have often thought that Ho is not only under the bed but everywhere. The whole of life is Ho."

"But you must charm it away, and then it will not touch you."

"And how am I to do that?"

"Don't you know?"

"I don't. . . . No, I really don't know." She slowly shook her head, as though pondering, and the long ringlets by her ears, like light bunches of grapes, shook also. The coach lurched over a frozen bump, their faces were brought close together and a soft ringlet brushed his cheek, burning it as with a kiss.

"Do you know? well, tell me then."

"It can't be told."

"Why not?"

"Because every one must find it out for himself. You, too, will know it some day."

"When?"

"When you fall in love."

"Ah, that's what it is, love!" She again shook her head doubtfully. "But how is it people say there is no real love nowadays, nothing but fickleness and treachery?"

"Who says that?"

" Everybody.

Le plus charmant amour
Est celui qui commence et finit en un jour.

Pushchin said that to me the other day. And auntie too : ' Ah, Márinka,' she said, ' you do not yet know what sort of bird love is : it no sooner comes than it flies away.' And grandmamma . . ."

" What a lot of them you have—aunts and grandmammas ! "

" Yes, ever so many ! "

" And do you believe them all ? "

" Why, of course."

She had the habit of saying " Why, of course," and she did it so charmingly that he was waiting for her to say it.

" How could I disbelieve them ? One ought to believe one's elders. I am silly myself and so I believe clever people. I am all made up of other people's words like a patchwork quilt."

" But there is some one hiding under the quilt, isn't there ? " he asked, smiling.

" You must find that out," she answered, screwing up her eyes and looking up at him with a roguish smile. And again there gleamed that sunbeam which caresses everything upon which it falls.

She was silent for a time, then sighed and a thought, no longer childish, darkened her face.

" That's how it is, prince. Love will fly away and Ho will remain : it has no wings, you know, it creeps like a worm or like a huge spider—monstrous, hideous."

They were both silent, and again they felt that the silence was drawing them together in an intimacy that grew irresistibly.

"Very well," said Golitsin, "the aunties and grandmammas may think what they like. But do you yourself want love to fly away?"

"Why, of course not! I like to love truly—I don't know how to love a little. The cape must not drop off one shoulder but cling fast to both."

"That's right, Márinka, that's right!" Golitsin looked at her as though he suddenly remembered and recognized her: so that's what you are like! "How good you are!" he said in a quite different, gentle voice.

"Good, indeed! You don't know me yet. Ask mamma—she will tell you what an unbearable girl I am; hard-hearted, obstinate."

"Look here, Márinka, may one talk to you plainly?"

"Why, of course. I like plain talking myself. I can't endure ceremonies!"

"I'll tell you what, then, Marya Pavlovna," he began and then stopped suddenly; like Márinka just now, he turned away, reddened and looked down. She looked at him, interested.

"Don't marry Mr. Akvilonov," he said with sudden decision.

"What next! Why?"

"Because you don't love him."

"How not love him? I am engaged to him, that means I love him."

"No, you don't. For you he is—Ho."

"What rubbish! He is an excellent, respectable, well-intentioned man. He can make any girl happy. Every one says that—mamma, and grandmamma, and auntie."

"But don't you marry him, all the same."

"But what is it to you? What a strange man you

are ! And how dare you ? I ought to be angry, but I am stupid and don't know how to. . . ."

"Well, forgive me."

"I won't."

"Don't be angry, you dear good girl. . . ."

He stopped suddenly and stole a glance at her. Again, as before, she had bent down to the frozen window and breathed on it, holding the palms of her hands up to her mouth ; then she began to write with her finger on the part which she had thawed.

"L. Do you see L ? The name of your betrothed begins with L, doesn't it ? "

"What betrothed ? "

"Well, you are a nice one ! Fancy forgetting your betrothed ! Aïe-aïe-aïe, that's very wrong. And why do you hide it from me ? I know it—Pushchin told me you are engaged to a beautiful girl in Petersburg and her name begins with L. . . ." She laughed brightly, but her eyes were sad.

"Why with L ? Ah, yes—'Liberty,' " guessed Golitsin.

"And do you know, prince, perhaps it isn't so ? " She stopped, laughing suddenly, and looked at him severely, almost sternly.

"What isn't so ? "

"Why, this about love. It is not love that saves from Ho."

"What is it then ? "

"I don't know, I can't say. There is a poem—my father was very fond of it :

> With humble heart one must have faith
> And patiently await the end,"

she said softly, but there was such strength in that softness

that Golitsin looked at her in surprise : a moment before she had been a child, and now—a woman.

At that moment the coach leaned on one side, going down a slope, and almost turned over. Márinka cried out in alarm and seizing the arm of the seat, accidentally put her hand on Golitsin's. He pressed it and bent low over her face. She drew back slightly, wanted to draw her hand away, but he did not let it go.

"*Marie*," said Nina Lvovna's indistinct voice behind the partition.

Márinka listened, but did not answer. They both kept quiet in the dark like children who are doing something naughty.

"You've got a piece of court-plaster over your eyebrow," he said to her in a laughing whisper.

"It isn't court-plaster, it's a mole," she answered in the same gay whisper. "When I was little the children used to tease me about it."

He bent still lower over her, and she drew further back.

"My sweet, my dear," he murmured, so low that she need not have heard it had she wished not to.

"*Marie, où est tu donc, mon enfant?*" called Nina Lvovna, this time quite awake and articulate.

"Here, mamma! I am coming. . . . Here is the station." The coach stopped. Red lights and black shadows moved across the window. Márinka got up.

"Don't go!" said Golitsin in a whisper.

"I must. Mamma would be vexed."

He still held her hand. Suddenly he raised it to his lips and kissed it where it never is kissed—in the palm, warm, fresh and tender like the cup of a flower warmed by the sun.

For the night Palashka as usual came to sit with him—

for the day Márinka again. Nina Lvovna did not stand on ceremony any more and allowed her daughter to sit with him as much as she liked.

But whether it was because Nina Lvovna was awake and could hear them, or because Márinka herself became suddenly reserved and on her guard after what had happened the day before, their conversation was constrained and insignificant. She told him of her life at Birdcherrylands. Everything in her story was simple and matter-of-fact, but there was a feeling of far-away old times about it, as about a charming fairy-tale.

At the end of the avenue of limes, with rooks' nests in them, on the steep bank of the quiet river Kashirka, stood her grandfather's arbour with a half-effaced inscription over the entrance : "Here to find rest." In this arbour Márinka read Mrs. Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and Kotzebue's *The Sufferings of the Ortenberg Family*. She was fond of reading "terrible and touching" books. And in winter, at dusk, when in the half-dark drawing-room the blue light of the moon streaming through the frozen windows mingled with the red light of the ikon lamp in her mother's bedroom, her cousin Adèle sang to the accompaniment of the clavicord old-fashioned songs, so silly, so tender. And Márinka wept as she listened.

She believed in fortune-telling, in prophetic signs which her old nurse taught her ; if she saw a thread on the floor or a circle made by the watering-can on the sand, she would never step over it. She knew that when the logs burning in the stove send out sparks, there will be visitors ; and that when a cock crows at an unusual hour, one must take it off the perch and feel its feet—if they are warm, it means news, and if cold—a death.

She was good at housekeeping, far better than mamma.

She could salt cucumbers better than anyone in the district. And she was good at needlework too.

"Are you doing this on purpose, Márinka?" Golitsin interrupted her at last, laughing.

"Doing what?"

"I talk to you about love, and you tell me about salted cucumbers!"

She said nothing, only bit her lip, put her finger to it and nodded in her mother's direction, as though they already had a secret in common.

And whatever they spoke about, each word had another meaning, a deep and important one. Sometimes they paused suddenly, smiling at one another in happy wonder as though at the joy of reunion after a long, long parting. And as the day before, both felt again, that whether they wanted it or not, they were being drawn into an intimacy that grew irresistibly. She was still afraid of him, still distrusted him; but when through the long lashes of her downcast eyes he caught the glimpse of a shy caress, it seemed to him that this caress was no longer for all, but for him alone.

"What am I doing? Why am I upsetting the poor girl?" he thought at times, coming to himself, and then again forgot everything, intoxicated by the fragrance of love with which the charming girl was surrounded as the lilac with the dewy freshness of morning.

"You should marry Márinka, Golitsin." He recalled Pushchin's words; he had taken them for a joke then. "We are going to the scaffold, Pushchin, and you talk of marriage!"—"Well, even going to the scaffold isn't so bad when you are married. At any rate, there will be somebody to weep for you. No, really, you should marry her and save her from that old rogue and skinflint, Akvilonov."

He, too, was disgusted at the thought of Márinka's marrying Akvilonov. When a butterfly is caught in a web, one wants to save it from the spider. But how was it to be done? In Petersburg he would have no thoughts to spare for Márinka: there would be the conspiracy, the rebellion, the casting down of the tyrant, the liberation of Russia. And yet, maybe, the destinies of kingdoms and of nations weigh no more in the scales of God than the destiny of one human soul?

Looking into her face, so full of life, he thought of another face,—a dead one; in the sombre light of daytime candles Sofya Naryshkin,[1] a girl of sixteen, dressed in a white wedding-dress, lay in her coffin, slender, graceful, sharp and pointed like a flying arrow.

> "Where I am, thou ask'st, and where I wended
> When my fleeting shadow pass'd from thee?
> Am I not concluded now, and ended?
> Have not life and love been granted me?
>
> "Find I him from whom I had to sever?—
> Doubt it not, we met and we are one.
> There, where what is join'd, is join'd forever,
> There, where tears are never more to run."

She will not fail him—nor will he fail her. That first love was the last. And even if he did love Márinka, he would not be false to Sofya. They were together—the earthly and the heavenly. Just as in the last reckoning heaven and earth were one, so were Sofya and Márinka.

Early in the morning of the third day the coach drew near Petersburg. After they had passed the last station, Pulkovo, there came a warm breath from the sea; the

[1] An illegitimate daughter of the Emperor Alexander I.—*Translator's note.*

frozen window thawed, began to weep, and through the tears on it could be seen a dismal white plain with snow-covered marshy hillocks that looked like the graves of an enormous cemetery. And at the very edge of the white plain could be seen some black specks—Petersburg houses.

"Well, good-bye, prince," said Márinka. "We shall be there directly. I am going to my betrothed and you to yours. . . . Will you think of me sometimes?"

He said nothing and kissed her hand, again as before in the palm, warm, soft and tender as the cup of a flower warmed by the sun.

"Will you come to see us in Petersburg?" she asked in a whisper.

"I will."

"And if your betrothed does not let you?"

"I am not betrothed to anyone."

"Really?"

"Really."

"On your honour?"

"On my honour. And you, Márinka, you are not betrothed either, are you?"

"I don't know. Perhaps not."

And again they smiled at each other in silence—they remembered, they recognized. "I could love you," said the deep look in his eyes. "And I too," said the answering look in hers.

"*Marie*, what are you doing? It is time to get ready. Palashka, where is our pass? Where have you stowed it away again? What a trying girl!" was heard the mother's grumbling voice.

Long fences, kitchen-gardens, hovels, shops, inns, stretched on either side of the road. At last the coach stopped at a low-pitched little house with yellow walls

still bespattered with the summer mud and with striped sentry-boxes at each side of the gate.

The coach door was opened and a veteran with a moustache peeped in. The officer on duty signed the travellers' passes and called to the sentry "Lift up!" The gate was raised and the coach drove into Petersburg.

II

FROM November 27th, when the news of Alexander I's death was received, an extraordinary stillness reigned in Petersburg. Everything was silent and motionless, as though holding its breath. The theatres were closed; military bands were not allowed to play; ladies put on mourning; requiem services were sung in the churches, and the melancholy sound of bells floated over the town from morning till night.

The whole country had sworn allegiance to Constantine I. Ukases were signed with his name; roubles with his head on them were being coined; prayers for him were said in churches. He was expected to arrive any day, but he did not come and rumours spread about the town. Some said that he had abdicated, others that he had consented to reign, and no one knew the truth.

Messengers galloped from Petersburg to Warsaw and from Warsaw to Petersburg; the brothers exchanged letters, but nothing came of it.

"It is about time these amenities were ended," grumbled the ministers.

"When are we to know at last who is our Tsar?" asked the Empress Marie Feodorovna, losing patience.

"We have a coffin on the throne," whispered the loyal subjects in subdued terror.

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The day after the oath of allegiance was taken, portraits of the new Emperor were displayed in the shop windows in the Nevsky. Passers-by crowded in front of them. Constantine was ugly in the portrait, and worse still in reality. He had a snub-nose like Paul I, large protruding eyes of a muddy-blue, bushy eyebrows meeting over the eyes, with thick tufts of fair hair that used to bristle and stand out when he was angry ; long arms that came to below the knees like monkeys' paws : he looked as though he could walk on all fours. Altogether he was like a huge anthropoid ape. People remembered how his grandmother, Empress Catherine II, used to complain of his unseemly and dishonourable conduct : " Everywhere, even in the streets, he behaves in such an indecent way that I keep expecting some one will give him a thrashing. I cannot understand from whom he could have got this vile *sans-culottisme* which lowers him in every one's eyes."

He used to sign his letters to his tutor, the Frenchman Laharpe, " *l'âne Constantin*." He was not stupid, but only " played the fool," so that they should leave him in peace and not pester him with the crown. " Tyrannical whirl," the courtiers used to call him. Once at a parade his horse shied and rushed to one side. He drew his sword and gave it such a beating that it nearly died. Russia will be the horse, and Constantine—the mad horseman. It was hoped, however, that he would refuse the crown " from natural aversion."

" They will strangle me, as they strangled my father," he said. " I know you, you rascals, I know you ! " he added with a malicious smile. " Now you shout ' Hurrah,' but if I am dragged to the scaffold and you are asked, ' Is this your pleasure ? ' you will shout just as loudly, ' Yes, yes.' "

It was rumoured that when he read the manifesto about his accession to the throne he was overcome with faintness and asked to be bled.

"Have the fools taken to recruiting for the throne?" he shouted in a fury. "I won't go! They started the mess themselves, let them settle it as best they can!"

When this was known in Petersburg, every one was indignant.

"One cannot play about with the right of succession to the throne as though it were private property," said some.

"Why not?" answered others. "In Russia one can do anything. We are cowards. You have only to threaten us with arrest and we climb down."

"Who is to get the sheep?" asked the jokers, making a wager.

"What sheep?"

"Why, us. Don't they drive us from one allegiance to another, like a flock of sheep?"

People argued which was better—Constantine or Nicolas. The Emperor Paul I had appointed Nicolas, a five-months' old baby, to be colonel-in-chief of the cavalry regiment of the guards and given him the rank of lieutenant-general. Before the boy could walk he used to beat the drum and wave a toy sword. And when he was older he loved jumping out of bed at night in order to stand with a rifle on his shoulder. He never wanted to know anything except soldiering. The Grand Dukes' tutor, Lamsdorf, used to beat the boys on the head with a ramrod till they almost fainted. "May God judge him for the poor education we have had," Nicolas himself used to say later.

He had not been trained to be an heir to the throne; till twenty he had no fixed duties whatever and all his

knowledge of the world was acquired in the palace ante-chambers and in the secretaries' room. "He has the furious temper of Paul and is unforgiving like Alexander." True he had brains, but that was precisely what people feared most : the cleverer, the more spiteful.

He had a perfect mastery of the Prussian army regulations and was altogether a German. It was said that with his accession Germans would overrun Russia, which seemed "half conquered" as it was.

Constantine was a brute and Nicolas a machine. Which was better, a machine or a brute ?

III

ON the dark morning of December 13th the Grand Duke Nicolas sat at a little shaving-table before a looking-glass with a wax candle on either side, and as he looked at himself, he thought, "How pale and thin I've grown ! Poor Nick ! Poor boy ! *Pauvre diable ! Je deviens transparent.*"

He was well satisfied with his appearance. "Apollo Belvedere" the ladies called him. Although he was twenty-seven he was still as thin as a boy. Tall, slender, flexible like a willow wand. A narrow face, all in profile. Extremely regular features as though carved in marble, set, immovable. "When he comes into a room, the temperature goes down," somebody said of him. Thin, reddish hair with a slight wave in it ; side whiskers of the same colour on the thin cheeks ; big, dark, sunken eyes ; a hooked aquiline nose ; a sharply receding forehead ; a protruding jaw. An expression as though he were always out of spirits—cross about something or suffering from toothache. "Apollo with a tooth-

ache,"—he remembered Empress Elizabeth Alexeyevna's joke as he looked at his morose face in the looking-glass.

"How many times have I told you to beat up the soap properly, you idiot!" he shouted at Vladimir Fyodoritch Adlerberg, or simply "Fyodoritch," a general aide-de-camp who acted as his valet. "The water is cold! the razor blunt!" He moved the cup away and threw down the razor.

Fyodoritch bustled about silently. Dark-haired, fat and soft as cotton-wool, he looked clumsy but was quick and nimble.

"Well, how did Sasha sleep?" asked Nicolas, calming down.

"His Highness has slept very well," answered Adlerberg. "But ever since the morning he has been crying for the Anitchkin palace and his horses."

"What horses?"

"Wooden horses: he has left them behind."

"No, it's not over horses but over his unfortunate father. He is scenting trouble ahead," thought Nicolas.

"Where are you dining to-day, your Highness?" asked Adlerberg.

"At the Anitchkin, Fyodoritch; for the last time at the Anitchkin," sighed Nicolas.

After his brother Alexander's death he moved to the Winter Palace and lived there in strict seclusion as though under arrest, considering it "unseemly" to show himself to the public.

He lived as though he were camping. A narrow camp-bed was uncomfortably placed by the side of a glass book-case; the leather mattress was stuffed with hay; his grandmother, Catherine II, had accustomed him to such a Spartan bed. On the floor stood an open portmanteau with clothes that had not been unpacked.

The only object of luxury was a large mahogany looking-glass. On the shelves by the mirror there were combs and brushes, and a bottle of scent, *Parfum de la Cour* ; near by, on a special stand, rifles, swords, sabres and a cornet-à-piston.

When he had finished shaving he took off the old military coat which he used for a dressing-gown and put on the uniform of a general of the Izmailovsky regiment —dark green with a red lining and an embroidery of golden oak leaves.

Standing before the mirror, he spent a long time dressing slowly and carefully, like a young beauty going to her first ball. He looked himself up and down, straightening every pleat ; with Adlerberg's help he laced himself in, and did up every hook, every button. In the uniform he seemed still taller, thinner and more slender than before, and with his rounded chest and his wine-glass waist he looked like a young Prussian corporal ready for the Potsdam parade.

When the toilet was finished, Fyodoritch went out of the room and Nicolas knelt down before the ikon. He hastily made small signs of the cross and bowed down, touching the floor with his head. After reading the regulation prayers, he wanted to add something from himself about the difficult day before him. But he could think of nothing—he had no words of his own. He believed in God, but when he thought of Him he imagined a black hole where it was " strict and fearsome," as the Emperor Paul I used to say about the discipline in the Russian army. One might call and pray as much as one liked—no one would answer from the hole.

He got up, and sat down in an armchair. He felt ill and shattered. He had slept badly and had had a

bad dream. "The dream is likely to come true," he thought. It was not for nothing he always feared his brother : it was as though he had a foreboding that Constantine would make trouble some day. And he had jeered at Nicolas all his life. Now he was pushing him on to the throne and mocking him about it : "We shall see how you will get out of this silly business, *un empereur parvenu* !"

Nicolas wrote him courteous letters, called him his benefactor, implored him, humiliated himself : "Falling at your feet, dear Constantine, I beseech you, have pity on your unfortunate brother !" And at the same time he thought, gnashing his teeth, "You vile buffoon ! you damned *sans-culotte* ! What are you doing to me ! Killing is too good for you !"

"Fyodoritch, tea !"

"In a minute, your Highness."

In the mornings he took tea with cream and rolls. But to-day he had tea only—he was not hungry.

Benckendorf announced Prince Alexander Nikolaevitch Golitsin.

"With the manifesto ?"

"Yes, your Highness."

"Ask him in."

Golitsin, accompanied by Lopuhin and Speransky, came in.

"Ready ?"

"Yes, sire."

Golitsin gave him the manifesto copied out afresh.

"Pray sit down, gentlemen," said Nicolas, and began reading aloud :

"We hereby declare to all our faithful subjects. With contrite heart bowing down before the unfathomable decrees of the Almighty . . ."

Without looking up, Nicolas felt that Speransky's eyes were fixed upon him. He always felt uncomfortable under this gaze, that was too clear and penetrating.

He regarded Speransky as a desperate "Jacobin." It was not for nothing that Alexander exiled him and nearly put him to death as a traitor. "You can't trust him further than you can see," thought Nicolas, and, however cringing and respectful Speransky might be, Nicolas always fancied he was laughing at him as though he were a little boy. Somebody in his presence called Speransky "a great philosopher"; Nicolas said nothing and only smiled sarcastically. He hated philosophy more than anything in the world. And yet he felt that he could not shout at Speransky as he did at his officers in the riding school: "Gentlemen, you must think of service and not of theories. I cannot endure philosophers! I will drive them all into consumption!"

"Through the death of our dear brother the Emperor Alexander Pavlovitch, now resting in the Lord," he went on reading, "we have lost a father and a sovereign who for twenty-five years showered benefits upon Russia and ourselves. When on the 27th of November the news of this grievous event reached us, steadying our spirit for the fulfilment of a sacred duty and following the movement of our heart at the very first hour of sorrow and lamentation, we took the oath of allegiance to our brother the Tsarevitch and Grand Duke Constantine Pavlovitch as the lawful heir to the throne of all the Russias, in accordance with the right of primogeniture."

Then followed "the explanation of the inexplicable": the late Emperor's secret will, Constantine's abdication in favour of Nicolas, Nicolas's abdication in favour of Constantine—in short, all the "domestic arrangements"

and "the playing with the right of accession to the throne as though it were private property."

"This isn't at all clear," said Nicolas, and at once felt self-conscious.

"Do you wish me to alter the passage, your Majesty?" It is easy to say alter, but one must know *how*. And this was precisely what he did not know.

"No, leave it," he said sulkily, with a wave of his hand. "We call upon all our loyal subjects to join us in fervent prayer to the Almighty that He may give us strength to bear the burden laid upon us by His holy Providence. May He strengthen our good intentions: to live solely for our beloved fatherland, to follow the example of the lamented Emperor; may our reign be merely a continuation of his reign, and may all that he desired for the good of Russia come to fruition, while his sacred memory inspires us with zeal and with the hope to deserve the blessing of the Almighty and the love of our people."

He liked the manifesto, but he showed no sign of this. When he had finished reading it he looked more sulky than ever.

He took the pen to sign his name and put it back: he remembered that he ought to think of God at a moment like this. He closed his eyes, crossed himself; but, as usual, the thought of God proved to be only a black hole "where it is strict and fearsome"; one might call and pray as much as one liked, no one would answer from the hole. He signed at last without thinking of anything at all, and merely asked:

"Is to-day the thirteenth?"

"Yes, sire," answered Speransky.

"And to-morrow is Monday," thought Nicolas, frowning. He dated the manifesto December 12th.

"I have the happiness to congratulate your Imperial Majesty on your accession to the throne," said Lopuhin, approaching him and kissing him on the shoulder.

"Our angel is looking down upon you from heaven," said Golitsin with a sob, and also kissed Nicolas on the shoulder.

"There is nothing to congratulate me on, gentlemen; you ought to feel sorry for me," said Nicolas morosely, and suddenly, with an almost unconcealed challenge, turned to Speransky, who was sitting in silence, with his eyes cast down. "And you, Mihail Mihailitch, what do you say?"

"'May our reign be merely a continuation of his.' I shall never forgive myself those words, your Majesty," said Speransky, raising his slow glance.

"Those are not your words, but mine. And what is wrong with them?"

"This is not what Russia expects of your Majesty."

"What does it expect then?"

"A new Peter."

The flattery was both coarse and subtle. "*Il y a beaucoup de praporchique en lui, et un peu de Pierre le Grand*," Speransky said once of Nicolas as Grand Duke, and he could say the same of him as Emperor.

He suddenly bent down and caught the Tsar's hand to kiss it; but Nicolas hastily drew it away, embraced Speransky and kissed him on his bald head.

"Come, come, your excellency, you are flattering me." He smiled incredulously, and yet there was a sweet flutter at his heart: to be "another Peter" was his dream.

He added after a pause:

"I never thought I should reign. I was brought up to be a brigadier. But I hope to be worthy of my

destiny. I hope, too, that other people will do their duty to me as I have done mine. When I have acquired the necessary knowledge, I will put every one in his place. Ideas are not my business. The philosophers may say what they like, but for me to live means to serve, and if every one served as he ought, there would be order and quiet everywhere. That is my philosophy, gentlemen!"

Nicolas glanced at Speransky. He was silent, his eyes were shut, and his head bent down as though he were listening to music.

"And further," continued Nicolas, raising his voice, "I refuse to entertain the thought that in all that concerns the Empire entrusted to me by God any one of my subjects should presume to deviate from the path marked out by me."

He spoke abruptly, curtly, as though he were contradicting some one or finding fault; he was beginning to enjoy it—like a young cock that struts about, trying his voice, but cannot as yet crow properly.

"And if I am Emperor for one hour only, I will show that I have been worthy of it," he said in conclusion as he got up.

"Please call a meeting of the Council of State for eight o'clock this evening, your excellency," he asked Lopuhin, "to hear the manifesto and take the oath of allegiance. And I beg you, gentlemen, to keep the whole thing secret. . . . To-day I beg, to-morrow I will command." He could not refrain from ending on a high note again.

Lopuhin, Golitsin and Speransky went out of the room. They went out at one door, and Benckendorf came in at another.

A poor nobleman from the Baltic provinces, the future

famous detective, chief of the gendarmes and head of the Third Department, general aide-de-camp, Alexander Christophorovitch Benckendorf had a pleasant, even distinguished appearance; but his face was rather battered—one could see that he had led a gay life; it wore a fixed affable smile and a deceptively good-natured look, as is generally the case with evasive and indifferent men. He was not stupid and not unkind, but light and superficial in everything.

When he came in, Nicolas's morose and sullen expression immediately changed to a tender and sentimental one. His expression used to change instantly, with strange suddenness, just as if a mask were suddenly removed and another one put on. "A number of masks, but no face," some one said about him.

He seized Benckendorf's hands with both his, and gazed into his face in silence.

"Have you signed, your Majesty?"

"I have," answered Nicolas, with a deep sigh; and raised his eyes to heaven. "I have done my duty: our angel will be pleased with me. Everything shall be ended properly, or I will not remain alive. God's will and my brother's decision are being accomplished upon me. I may be going to destruction, but it cannot be helped. I am sacrificing myself for my brother; I am happy if, as his subject, I carry out his will. But what will become of Russia?"

He went on for a long time like this; the habit of sentimental babble was a legacy from his mother.

Benckendorf in patient boredom waited for him to finish.

"Well, how are things going on in the town?" asked Nicolas in a different, business-like voice, wiping his dry eyes with a handkerchief,—and again, as suddenly

as before, one mask fell off and another one was put on.

"All is quiet, your Majesty. But it may be the hush before the storm."

"So you expect a storm?"

"I do, sire. There are too many disaffected. Men's minds are already in a state of revolution."

"I seem to have made a mess of it with Rostovtsev yesterday," Nicolas remembered suddenly. "I did not find out the names after all. I shall never forgive myself for this. I ought to have discovered the names and had the men arrested."

"No, no, your Majesty, no arrests! Or the whole gang will take flight. Besides, you ought not to darken the first day of your reign."

"And what if they begin to act?"

"Let them. Then the arrests will not astonish anyone. You must go quietly and carefully. It doesn't do to exasperate people. You have enough ill-wishers as it is."

"But I have one friend!" exclaimed Nicolas, and pressed his hand warmly.

He went to the table, opened a drawer and got out an envelope with the inscription: "Most urgent. To be given into his Imperial Majesty's own hands." This was the report of General Dibitch, brought from Taganrog the day before.

"Here, read this. There is another conspiracy, it appears."

"In the second army? Colonel Pestel's secret society?" asked Benckendorf, without opening the envelope.

"You know already?" asked Nicolas, in surprise, almost in alarm. "What a man! He can see through a stone wall," he thought.

"Yes, your Majesty. As early as 1821 I had the good fortune to send in a report to the Emperor on this matter."

"And what came of it?"

"He was pleased to do nothing about it. My report lay for four years in his desk."

"A nice legacy he has left us!" Nicolas smiled malignantly.

"You haven't told anyone about this, your Majesty, have you?" asked Benckendorf, looking at him closely.

"No, I haven't," lied Nicolas: he was ashamed to confess that he had been foolish again and told Miloradovitch.

"Well, that's all right. The chief thing is that Miloradovitch should not know." Benckendorf seemed to have guessed what was in Nicolas's mind. "I had ventured at the time to suggest to his Majesty that this matter should not be entrusted to Miloradovitch."

"Why not?"

"Because he is himself surrounded by villains."

"Miloradovitch? Is he on their side too?" Nicolas turned pale.

"I don't know on whose side he is, but perhaps h is worse than all the conspirators taken together. It is dreadful to think, your Majesty, that the fate of the country should be in the hands of that soulless clown! I heard such a tale about him the other day that I could not believe my ears."

"What was it?"

"Spare me, sire. It is too revolting to repeat."

"Yes, tell me."

"When on November 27 the late Emperor's will was opened, Miloradovitch, with unheard-of impudence, opposed your Majesty's accession, and when somebody

said to him 'You are very bold, count,' he answered: 'One may well be bold when one has 60,000 bayonets in one's pocket,' and he laughed and patted himself on the pocket."

"The blackguard!" whispered Nicolas, turning still paler.

"And just now he said to me," Benckendorf went on, "'I doubt if the oath of allegiance will be a success. The Guards don't like him,'—that is, your Imperial Majesty. 'How do you mean a success?' I asked him. 'And what have the Guards to do with it? What sort of voice can they have?' 'Quite right,' he answered, 'they ought not to have a voice, but it has become a habit with them, a second nature.'"

"The blackguard!" Nicolas whispered again.

"'The wish of the late Emperor,' he said, 'would of course have been sacred to the Guards had he expressed it verbally; but they are sure to regard a will proclaimed after his death as a forgery.'"

"A forgery?" Nicolas started, and his face flushed as from a blow. "What is the meaning of it? Am I a usurper then?"

"Count Miloradovitch, your Majesty," Adlerberg announced, quietly opening the door and thrusting his head in.

"I won't see him," Nicolas was going to shout, but had not time: the door opened ajar, and the military governor-general of Petersburg, Count Miloradovitch, came in jauntily, clinking his spurs.

Going out, Benckendorf met Miloradovitch in the doorway, and with a low bow made way for him more amiably than ever.

A fellow-soldier of Suvarov, a hero of 1812, Miloradovitch, in spite of his sixty years, still retained the fine

bearing and the conquering air with which, in the fire of battle, under cannon balls, he used to light his pipe and adjust the folds of his cloak. Some called him a Bayard and others a boaster and a braggart. He dyed his hair and had a hooked nose, full lips and the oily eyes of an ageing admirer of the fair sex.

Miloradovitch came in, made his bow and was on the point of saying something, but glanced at Nicolas and was dumb : there was ferocious hatred in the Tsar's distorted face and gleaming eyes. But it disappeared like a flash of lightning—the mask was changed : the eyes grew dull and the face immovable, as though made of stone ; only a muscle in the cheek was twitching all the time.

" I have been long expecting you, your excellency. Pray sit down," he said calmly and civilly.

The change was so sudden that Miloradovitch wondered if that other distorted face had been only his fancy.

" Well, how are things going ? Have you arrested anyone ? " asked Nicolas.

" No, your Highness. Of the persons mentioned in General Dibitch's report there is not one in town, all are away on leave. And as to Lieutenant-Colonel Pestel, the order for his arrest has been despatched."

" And here, in Petersburg, is everything quiet ? "

" Yes, it is. There is exemplary order everywhere. One may say, there has never been such order. I am almost sure that there are here no accomplices of such a crime."

" Almost sure ? "

" Your Highness knows what I think : to make things perfectly safe, his Highness the Tsarevitch ought to hasten to Petersburg, read the Emperor's will at a

general meeting of the Senate, and, proclaiming your Highness Emperor, be the first to swear allegiance to you."

"And if this is not done, what then? You doubt the success of the oath? The Guards do not like me? And though they ought not to have a voice, it has become a habit, a second nature, with them? Is that it?" Nicolas looked at him intently, and the muscles in his cheek quivered more perceptibly.

"That rascal Benckendorf must have told him," thought Miloradovitch. But he did not lower his eyes —he began to get angry.

"Excuse me, your Highness."

"Not Highness, but Majesty," Nicolas interrupted him menacingly. "The manifesto is already signed."

"I have the happiness to congratulate your Majesty." Miloradovitch bowed. "But I must still do my duty. I never concealed the truth from your Highness . . . your Majesty, and I am not going to conceal it now: no, it is not easy to make people swear allegiance by means of a manifesto issued by the person who wishes to ascend the throne. . . ."

"A-ha! You have said it at last! The manifesto will be regarded as a forgery and myself as a usurper? Is that it?" said Nicolas with a sneer, and again something flashed in his face like lightning.

"I don't understand, your Majesty. . . ."

"You don't understand, count? Don't you understand your own words?"

"I don't know what wretch could have misrepresented my words like this. I wonder your Majesty cares to listen to tale-bearers." Miloradovitch turned pale, and the old "boaster" and "braggart" became for a moment the old soldier and Suvarov's companion in arms. He

was looking straight into Nicolas's eyes with the same conquering air with which, in the fire of battle, under cannon balls, he used to light his pipe and adjust the folds of his cloak.

Nicolas got up in silence, went up to the desk, opened a drawer, the same from which he had taken out Dibitch's report, got out a paper—Rostovtsev's letter—and came back to Miloradovitch.

"Does your excellency know that in Petersburg there also exists a conspiracy?"

"What conspiracy? There isn't, and there cannot be," said Miloradovitch, shrugging his shoulders.

"What is this, then?" Nicolas thrust the letter towards him and, pointing to the underlined passage, read out:

"There is on foot a conspiracy against you. It will flare up at the new oath of allegiance, and perhaps the blaze will light up the final downfall of Russia."

Miloradovitch took the letter, turned it over, glanced at the signature and gave it back without reading.

"Sub-lieutenant Rostovtsev. I know. Meetings of the 'Polar Star' at Ryleyev's. . . ."

The secret police had informed him of these meetings. "It is all nonsense! Leave these youngsters in peace to read to each other their wretched verses," he used to say, dismissing the whole thing carelessly.

And now, too, he dismissed it:

"It is all nonsense! These boys, scribblers, almanac-makers. . . ."

"How dare you, sir!" cried Nicolas, leaping up in a fury; his long, slim, lithe body straightened itself like a willow-wand that had been held by the ends. "You know nothing! You don't look after things! You will answer me with your head for this!"

Miloradovitch got up too, shaking with anger, but controlling himself he said with dignity :

" If I have not had the good fortune to deserve the confidence of your Highness, please order me to resign my post . . ."

" Silence ! "

" Allow me to ask, your Highness . . ."

" Silence ! "

In spite of his fury, Nicolas was conscious of everything, and if he wanted to, could have mastered himself, but he did not want to : the delight of fury ran through his veins like a fiery potion, and he abandoned himself to it with relish.

" Get out ! Get out ! Get out ! " he shouted, clenching his fists, stamping and advancing on Miloradovitch.

" He will attack me, and not strike, but bite like a madman," thought Miloradovitch with disgust, and began backing out of the door as a good big dog, its hair all a-bristle, draws back with a low growl before a small spiteful insect—a spider or a centipede.

He backed as far as the door, then turned round sharply to run out of the room. But again, as before, he met Benckendorf in the doorway. They got past one another, this time without any courtesy.

Benckendorf ran up to Nicolas and embraced him, making it appear as though he were supporting him.

" The blackguard ! The blackguard ! What is he doing to me ! He, and brother Constantine, and all, all. . . ." Nicolas fell on his breast, sobbing.

" *Courage, sire, courage,*" Benckendorf kept repeating. " God will not forsake you. . . ."

" Yes, God . . . and he, whom we shall bewail all our lives, our angel in heaven," said Nicolas, raising his eyes. " I breathe through him, I act through him—

let him be my leader, then ! God's will be done, I am prepared for anything : we shall die together, my friend ! If I am destined to perish I have the sword of an officer, the badge of a gentleman. I will die sword in hand, and will come before God's judgment seat with a clear conscience. To-morrow, the fourteenth, I am either Tsar or a corpse !''

IV

ON the morning of the 13th Golitsin and Obolensky drove up to Ryleyev's.

The page-boy Filka, who knew them, opened the door and let them in unannounced, as he probably did every one. During the last few days Ryleyev had had crowds of visitors from morning till night, coming and going with no more precautions. This was the meeting-place, the headquarters, so to speak, of the conspirators.

The host was not in the room. Officers and civilians, whom Golitsin did not know, were sitting at the table by a samovar, and talking in a low voice.

" Is Ryleyev at home ? " asked Obolensky, greeting them.

" He is in his study. He is asleep, I believe. But it does not matter, go in. He asked us to wake him when you came."

Obolensky knocked at the door. There was no answer. He opened it and went together with Golitsin into a narrow little room where there was hardly space enough to move between a big leather sofa, a writing-table, a book-case, and piled-up bundles of the *Polar Star*, an almanac published by Alexander Bestuzhev and Ryleyev. The windows looked on to the back-yard and the dirty-yellow wall of the next house.

The room was hot. There was a smell of medicines. On the night table by the sofa stood a number of bottles with prescriptions tied to them.

Ryleyev was asleep on the sofa, wearing an old dressing-gown, and a knitted wool kerchief round his throat, his face as still as that of a dead man. He looked so thin and ill that Golitsin hardly recognized him. He had caught a chill walking about the streets for two nights, inciting soldiers to rebellion, and had had an attack of laryngitis ; he was getting better now, but was still far from well.

Golitsin stopped at the door. Obolensky went up to the sofa. A board in the floor creaked. The sleeping man opened his eyes and stared at his guests with dull, unseeing, unrecognizing eyes.

" What is it ? What is it ? " he cried out in a low voice, sitting up, and convulsively, as though choking, he began with both hands tearing the kerchief off his throat. But his clumsy movements tightened the knot.

" Wait a minute, I will untie it." Obolensky bent down to him, undid the knot and took off the kerchief. " We have wakened and startled you, poor dear Ryleyushka," he said, sitting down on the sofa and stroking Ryleyev's head with gentle tenderness. " Have you had a bad dream ? "

" Yes, the same horrid thing again. I don't know how many times I have dreamt it already."

" But what is it ? "

" I don't know, I don't remember. . . . Why are you standing, Golitsin ? Sit down. . . . I think it is about that rope again. . . ."

" What rope ? "

Ryleyev without answering smiled a strange smile : there was still something of delirium in it.

Obolensky, too, became silent and remembered how Ryleyev during his illness had to have a Spanish-fly plaster on his neck ; when the bandage was being put on, they inadvertently touched the wound ; Ryleyev cried out with pain, and Nikolay Bestuzhev laughed and said : " You should be ashamed to cry out for such a trifle ! Have you forgotten what you are preparing your neck for ? "

" You are feverish again. Your head is quite hot. You ought not to have gone out to-day," said Obolensky, putting his hand on Ryleyev's forehead.

" To-day or to-morrow—it's all the same. To-morrow I shall have to go out in any case." Ryleyev smiled again, the same, strange, sleepy smile.

" What's on to-morrow ? "

" Oh, hang it ! We talk about trifles, and you don't yet know the chief thing," he began in a different voice : he was only now fully awake. " The final courier has arrived from Warsaw with Constantine's resignation. The Senate will meet to-morrow morning at seven, and the army will swear allegiance to Nicolas."

They were expecting this news every day, and yet it seemed unexpected. They understood : the rebellion was to be the next day. They were silent and thoughtful.

" Shall we be ready ? " asked Obolensky at last.

Ryleyev shrugged his shoulders.

" Yes, it is a stupid question ! We shall never be ready. Very well, to-morrow then, and God speed ! " decided Obolensky, and added after a pause : " And what are we to do about Rostovtsev ? "

Rostovtsev was not a member of the Secret Society, but was friendly with many of the members and knew something about the conspiracy. He recounted his

interview with the Grand Duke Nicolas in a manuscript entitled " The most beautiful day of my life," and gave it the day before to Obolensky and Ryleyev, saying : " Do what you like to me—I could not have acted differently."

" You know what I think," said Ryleyev.

" Yes, I do. But to kill the wretch means to give ourselves away. And is it worth while to soil one's hands ? "

" Yes, it is," Ryleyev said quietly. " And what do you say, Golitsin ? "

" I say that Rostovtsev wants to get the best of both worlds. He denounces the conspiracy to Nicolas, and washes his hands before us. But of course in his confession he could declare or conceal anything he pleased."

" So you think we are given away already ? " asked Ryleyev.

" No doubt, and we shall be arrested,—if not now, then after the oath of allegiance."

" What are we to do then ? "

" Say nothing about Rostovtsev's report and act. It is better to be taken in the open than in our beds. If we are to perish, people will know at any rate what we have perished for."

" And what do you think, Obolensky ? " Ryleyev asked again.

" I agree with him, of course."

With one hand Ryleyev took Golitsin's and with the other Obolensky's hand.

" Thank you, friends. I knew you would say this. And so, God speed ! We shall begin. Maybe we shall achieve nothing ourselves, but we shall teach others. We may perish—but our downfall will rouse the sleeping sons of our country ! "

He spoke as always in a bookish, affected style ; but there was no affectation in his dark clear eyes that seemed enormous in his wan face and glowed with a fire that made one feel uneasy ; there was no affectation in his face, which expressed all that he felt even before he said it.

" Yes, we can say at last that we begin to-morrow," continued Ryleyev. " How I have longed for this moment, how I have rejoiced ! And now the moment has come. Why then do I feel no joy ? Why is my soul sorrowful even unto death ? "

He leaned his elbows on his knees, rested his head on his hands and bent down as though crushed by a weight that had fallen upon him. Tears trembled in his voice.

" Forgive me, friends ! I ought not to speak of this."

" Yes, you ought, Ryleyev. Tell everything, you will feel better," said Obolensky.

" Pushkin used to call me a ' maker of schemes.' ' You are not a poet, you are a schemer,' he said. Yes, that is true." Ryleyev smiled. " I am a theorizer—not a man of action. I draw up plans but I don't build."

" You are not the only one, Ryleyev, we are all like that," Golitsin remarked.

" Yes, all. The other night when I was walking about the town, a group of soldiers gathered in an out-of-the-way little street between the barracks, listening to me. They understood all about the new oath of allegiance. " We'll stand up for Tsar Constantine to a man, we won't fail him ! " Well, I got warmed up and began talking of constitutional government, of freedom, of the rights of man. And I heard a drunken soldier behind me laughing, and so kindly as though he were sorry for me : ' Ah, sir, you are a nice gentleman,' he said, ' but you haven't much

sense ! You seem to speak in Russian, and yet there is no making out what you say ! ' That was all he said, but I suddenly understood. Yes, though in Russia, we are not Russian, among our own people we are aliens, without a home, without roots, strangers and foreigners, exiles forever. We do not even dare to say that we are rising for liberty—we say we are rising for the Tsar Constantine. We lie. And when the people learn the truth they will curse us and give us up to be crucified. Believe me, friends, I have never hoped that our cause could triumph except at the cost of our own lives. But I did think that we should see the promised land if only from afar. No, we shall not see it. Neither our eyes nor the eyes of our children or grandchildren shall see a free Russia ! We shall perish senselessly, ignominiously, without leaving a trace. We shall smash our heads against the wall, but shall not escape from the prison. Our bones will rot, but our hopes will not be fulfilled. Oh, it is hard, brothers; hard, more than one can bear ! "

He did not finish, and buried his face in his hands. Obolensky again sat down by his side and began stroking his hair with gentle tenderness.

" You are tired, you are worn out, my poor Ryleyushka ! "

" I am tired, Obolensky, oh, how tired ! They say now, there is another life. But this one is enough for me. I feel so tired that it seems death itself, eternity itself, would not give one sufficient rest. . . .

" Do you know what I keep thinking of ? " he went on after a pause. " What does it mean ? ' May this cup pass from Me.' How could He have said it ? That was what He came for, to drink this cup—and yet He did not want it, He felt weak, He was horrified. He, He—who was God ! Just like a man. . . . Tell me,

Golitsin, does God exist? Just simply say, does He?"

"He does," answered Golitsin, and smiled.

"Yes, you did answer simply," said Ryleyev, smiling also. "Well, I don't know, perhaps He does exist. Only what do you want Him for? You want freedom, don't you?"

"Is there no freedom with God?"

"No. If God, then slavery."

"There has been slavery, but there will be freedom."

"Will there? And when? But now. . . . No, Golitsin, it is cold, it is cold!"

"What is cold, Ryleyev?"

"Why, your God, your heaven. He who loves heaven does not love the earth."

"Can't one love both together?"

"Tell me how."

"*He* has taught us already: 'Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.' Here you have it together."

"Ah, you maker of schemes!"

"Well, perhaps I am. Such a scheme is worth dying for."

Ryleyev did not answer; he shut his eyes, bowed his head, and tears flowed down his face so quietly that he was not conscious of them.

Obolensky bent down with gentle tenderness, embracing and kissing him like a sick child.

"Never mind, never mind, Ryleyushka! Everything may yet go well. Christ be with you!"

V

PRINCE YEVGENY PETROVITCH OBOLENSKY, lieutenant in the Life Guards and the chief aide-de-camp of General Bistrom, commander of the Foot

Guards, was one of the founders of the Northern Secret Society.

The family of the Obolenskys lived simply and cheerfully in Moscow in an old-fashioned countrified-looking house, with lodges and outbuildings. When the young Obolensky entered the Pavlovsky regiment of the Guards and went to live in Petersburg, his aunt asked him, as the elder of the two, to look after her only son, Seryozha, who served in the same regiment and was quite a young boy, lively and full of mischief. Seryozha's tongue was as sharp as a razor. One day he made a gibe at his comrade in the regiment, Lieutenant Svinyin, and Svinyin called him out to a duel. When Obolensky heard of this, he went to the offended man and said that the duel must not take place, that Seryozha was a mere boy, not worth being angry with, but that if Svinyin was determined to fight, he could fight him, Obolensky. Svinyin took up the challenge, fought the duel, and was killed.

Prince Yevgeny was so kind-hearted that he could not hurt a fly, and killing a man gave him such a shock that he fell ill ; but he did not consider himself guilty and felt no remorse : he thought that killing in a duel was not a crime but a misfortune ; besides, he fought not on his own account but on his cousin's, who was an only son and almost a child, and could not be saved in any other way. He was so comforted by these considerations that when he recovered and returned to his former life of pleasure, he forgot the whole thing. But then he remembered again. Forgot once more, then again remembered,—and so many times over, until he realized at last that he would never forget and that the longer he lived the more lively, acute and unendurable would the memory become. The worst of it was that he did not

understand what was the matter with him : he still believed that he was not to blame, and yet he suffered so much that at moments he thought he would go mad or commit suicide.

At one of such moments he began to pray, almost unconsciously repeating the words of prayers he had learned as a child—Our Father, Hail Mary—and he felt better. Since that time he prayed often, and gradually he revived, like a man who was half stifled and then begins to breathe.

At last he understood that he felt better only when he ceased to excuse himself, accepted the whole burden of his guilt and regarded himself as an ordinary murderer, not a bit better and perhaps even worse than those who murder people on the high-road ; he understood that the guilt could not be excused, and could only be expiated. But he did not yet know how. He thought of giving up everything and going into a monastery, but he felt that that would not be enough : to go away was easier than to stay in the world. He had to do something with himself, and he joined first a Masons' lodge, and then the Northern Secret Society. And he soon began to feel that he would find there what he had been seeking—his work of expiation.

Inwardly he was changed beyond recognition, yet outwardly remained the same brilliant officer of the Guards, with a pleasant but ordinary face, with a smooth fair skin and a healthy colour ; he was clean-shaven, and looked younger than his twenty-nine years.

When Golitsin came from the country, Obolensky saw a great deal of him and eagerly listened to his accounts of the Southern Society, the Slavs, Sergey Muravyov and his " Catechism." He grasped at once Muravyov's main idea about freedom with God.

On the morning of December 13th Obolensky and Golitsin walked from Ryleyev's to Trubetskoy's.

"Does Trubetskoy know that it is to-morrow?" said Golitsin.

"No. We shall tell him."

"Is it true, they say, he is not so keen on the Society as he used to be?"

"Perhaps."

"Is it because he is afraid?"

"I don't think so. He stood under gun-fire for fourteen hours at the Shevardino redoubt as calmly as if he were playing chess. But the courage of a soldier is not the same thing as the courage of a conspirator. It would be difficult to find a man less suitable for our job than Trubetskoy. He is undecisive and polite—polite to madness. He would rather bring ruin on himself and others than do something not quite polite. And it is a polite revolution he wants—a revolution made with rose-water. That's one thing; and then he is too prosperous: he is young, rich, well-connected, married to a charming woman. He is like the young man in the Gospel who sadly turned away from the Lord, for he had many possessions. . . ."

"To turn away at such a moment is base!" cried Golitsin.

Obolensky looked at him, with his attentive, intelligent and kind eyes slightly screwed up and apparently smiling, though in truth they were serious and even sad.

"No, it is not a case of baseness."

"What is it, then?"

"Why, it is perhaps the very thing that Ryleyev was talking about just now: we are not men of action but visionaries. 'Makers of schemes,' theorizers, sleep-walkers. We walk on the very edge of the roof, but if

you call any one of us by name he will fall and smash himself on the ground. All our rebellion is Mary without Martha, soul without body. And it is not we alone—all Russians are like that : splendid people in their thoughts, but in action—soft, mushy, as it were, boneless. I suppose it is from slavery. We have been slaves too long."

" I say, Obolensky, it's a bad look-out. The rising is to-morrow and our dictator is thinking of the most polite way to betray us. Why did you choose such a man ? What was Ryleyev thinking about ? "

" Oh, it's no use blaming Ryleyev. He does not know people at all. He doesn't know himself. You saw how he suffers, but why it is—he does not know."

" Do you know ? "

" I think I do."

" Why is it, then ? "

" Because of the blood," said Obolensky quietly, in a slightly changed voice.

" What blood ? "

" The blood that has to be shed, the killing," he went on lower still. " He has thought it all over, settled it, counted on his fingers. Do you remember Pestel counting how many victims there must be ? Then Ryleyev did not agree, he was horrified, and now he himself thinks that it is not enough to kill the Tsar alone—all the members of the Imperial family must be exterminated. To kill one will not serve the purpose of the Society—but will, on the contrary, defeat it : it will divide people's minds, create parties, excite the supporters of the Imperial family and bring about a civil war. But if all are exterminated, people will have to resign themselves to the fact, and a new Government will be established. Yes, he has thought it all out,

has decided, has reckoned it on his fingers, and yet something stops him. He himself does not know what it is, and that's why he suffers."

"And do you know this too?"

"Yes, I do," answered Obolensky, and then sank into silence. Golitsin, too, said nothing, and they both suddenly felt awkward, as though ashamed to look each other in the eyes. A weight seemed to have fallen upon them, and the longer the silence lasted, the heavier the weight became.

They turned from Moika to the Kryukov Canal. It was still more empty and desolate there—only the snow crunched under their feet. They saw that there was no one about, but it seemed to them that somebody was following and listening.

"I know that one cannot kill," said Obolensky at last with such strange suddenness that Golitsin looked at him in surprise.

"Why not? Because it is a sin?"

"No, but simply one cannot, it's impossible."

"How do you mean, impossible? Men kill each other right enough."

"They do in madness, in aberration, by chance, but it is impossible to kill intentionally, in full possession of one's faculties. To make up one's mind: I shall kill, and then kill—that man cannot do."

"Why, of course he can."

"Give an instance."

"Take war or capital punishment."

"That's quite a different thing. It is the law that kills, and the law is blind, it does not see men's faces—the law is the same for all. And in war, too, everybody kills everybody else—but which kills which, no one can tell, the face is not seen. And the face is the chief

thing here. To see a man face to face and then kill him—this is what is impossible. Don't you understand?"

"I don't." Golitsin suddenly got angry. He remembered how he agreed with Pestel "to exterminate all, root and branch," and that decision appeared to him easy by comparison with the weight which seemed to have fallen upon them now. "You speak so strangely, Obolensky, it's as if you knew something." He looked straight into his face and saw that Obolensky flushed crimson; little children flush like that when they are ready to burst into tears.

"Yes, I do know," said Obolensky, with an effort, and all of a sudden he turned pale. "Perhaps you don't know, Golitsin, that I have killed a man," he whispered almost inaudibly, and his white lips smiled so piteously that Golitsin's heart fell.

"Forgive me, for God's sake, Yevgeny Petrovitch. You misunderstood me. . . . Killing in a duel is not murder, is it?"

"It does not matter what it is called. I did it—and I know."

Both were silent again and the weight oppressing them became still more intolerable.

"I keep thinking about Trubetskoy. He really is almost worse than Rostovtsev." Golitsin tried to change the conversation, to throw off the burden, but it seemed false, and he felt it himself. He was angry again. He pitied Obolensky, but the more he pitied him, the more angry he became.

"But do you know, Obolensky," he began drily, almost rudely, "if one is afraid of wolves one mustn't go into the wood: if we cannot kill, we must not rebel."

"Yes, we must," replied Obolensky, as quietly as

before ; the more heated the one became, the quieter the other.

" But what rebellion can there be without bloodshed ? Rebellion made with rose-water, in Trubetskoy's style ? "

" You need not be afraid, Golitsin, bloodshed there will be. One cannot kill intentionally, but of unintentional killing there has always been plenty—and there will be in our case too."

" Ah, so that's what it is ! I believe I am beginning to understand at last. The fools will do the killing, and the clever ones will stand on one side so as not to soil themselves ? "

" Why do you talk like this ? " Obolensky looked at him reproachfully. " You know very well that we are going to face the agony of crucifixion together, all together. There is no greater agony on earth."

" What agony ? What do you mean ? Tell me straight out, must we take life or not ? "

" We must."

" And we cannot ? "

" No, we cannot."

" We must and we cannot, at the same time ? "

" Yes, at the same time."

" But this is sheer lunacy ! " Golitsin stopped and stamped with fury. " Damnation take us all ! What are we doing ! What are we doing ! Ryleyev is wretched, Trubetskoy is playing false, Rostovtsev gives us away, and you and I are going mad. Soft, mushy, with no backbone, vile, vile Russians ! A holy cause in vile hands ! "

" Well, Golitsin, such we are." Obolensky smiled, and his face suddenly changed and brightened beyond recognition. " And yet, and yet, we ought to begin. Never mind if we are soft—we will grow firm ; never

mind if we are vile—we shall grow pure. Never mind if we achieve nothing—others will achieve. 'Let there be one king in heaven and in earth—Jesus Christ,' all Russia will say it one day—and achieve it. The Lord will not forsake Russia. If only we are with Him, there will be such a revolution as the world has never seen!"

VI

THE "dictator" of the conspirators, Prince Sergey Petrovitch Trubetskoy, colonel of the Preobrazhensky regiment of the Life Guards, lived in his father-in-law's house on the English Embankment.

He met his guests with his usual gentle and even unworldly kindliness.

"We have only come for a minute, prince," Obolensky began, not sitting down in spite of Trubetskoy's invitation. "Ryleyev particularly asks you to come."

"Good heavens!" Trubetskoy clutched at his head. "I am very much to blame. Would you believe it, I have been meaning to go to him every day, but there is so much to do in the regiment. Certainly, certainly, I will go one of these days . . . to-morrow."

"No, not to-morrow, but to-day, at once. We have come for you, prince, and will not go away without you," Obolensky said firmly.

"At once? I really don't know. But why do you stand, sit down, if only for a minute. Won't you have some lunch?"

They resolutely refused lunch, but had to sit down in the deep armchairs, soft as a cradle, by the fire that glowed pleasantly in the whitish midday dusk. Seeing that the fire might be too much for Golitsin, Trubetskoy

moved the screen so that his feet should be warm and his face not too hot—and only then he himself sat down opposite his guests, with his face back to the light—an unconscious trick of shy people.

He was not very young—over thirty. He was tall, round-shouldered, narrow-chested like a consumptive, slightly pock-marked, with reddish hair and scanty dishevelled side whiskers, prominent ears, a long narrow face, a large hooked nose and thick lips, with lines of suffering at the corners of the mouth. He was rather like a Jew, as his boy friends used to tease him when he was little. He was plain, but there was something so noble in his large grey eyes, childishly simple, kind and sad, that Golitsin thought, "Surely Obolensky and I must have been wrong."

And he remembered a passage from the constitution drawn up by Trubetskoy, "The Statute of the Slavo-Russian Empire": "Serfdom is abolished, the distinction between the classes is done away with, since it is opposed to the Christian religion according to which all men are brothers, all are born for happiness, and all are simply men, for in the sight of God all are weak." These words expressed him completely: he was not a Brutus, not a Robespierre, not a Marat, but an aristocratic liberal, a good Russian prince going to the people with liberty, fraternity and equality—the Don Quixote of the revolution.

"My position in the Society is very painful. I feel that I have not the courage to work for destruction, but I fear I have no longer any power to stop it," he began in a muffled, husky but pleasantly mellow voice. "Listening to him is like stroking velvet," thought Golitsin.

"They only want my name. Ryleyev manages everything, and I know nothing. I don't even know

how I came to be dictator. Ryleyev is prepared to act with hardly any hope of success. But if one thinks of the means at his command and of his intentions, this is the height of folly. The troops which can be used for the purposes of the Society are not sufficient. No person of importance is taking part in this enterprise. We have got only feather-brained young men who do nothing but chatter. It is ridiculous to think that three or four lieutenants without weight, without name, dream of shattering an Empire that has been built up during centuries. . . ."

"*Serge*, are you here?" said a young feminine voice, and turning round Golitsin saw on the threshold of the door that led to the princess's apartments a lady unknown to him. She was on the point of coming in, but when she saw the visitors she stood still, hesitating.

"How do you do, prince." She recognized Obolensky and went up to him. "Excuse me, I am afraid I have disturbed you."

"Allow me to introduce to you Prince Golitsin, my dear," said Trubetskoy.

As Golitsin kissed her hand he smelt the fragrance of the tea-rose. All in black—she was in mourning for the late Emperor—with smooth black bandeaux of hair over the temples, she herself reminded one of a tea-rose by the creamy, smooth and fresh pallor of her skin.

They were all silent. The princess exchanged glances with her husband, and from this glance alone it could be seen how happy they were. They thought of themselves as an elderly couple, but to others they still seemed newly married. When they were together among other people they smiled a guilty smile, as though ashamed of their happiness.

They smiled now too, but there was a look of anxious foreboding in their eyes.

"Does she know who we are and what we have come for? Even if she does not, she feels it," thought Golitsin, and for some reason he suddenly remembered Márinka.

After saying a few pleasant words, the princess said good-bye.

"Once more excuse me, gentlemen. Don't forget, my dear, at the Belosyelskys, at four o'clock. I shall send the carriage for you." She turned to her husband as she was going out and again there was a look of anxious foreboding in her eyes.

"For God's sake, forgive me! I had really no idea. . . . They told me the princess had gone out," muttered Trubetskoy in confusion.

"Come, prince," Golitsin interrupted him. "Even if the princess knew everything, there would be no harm in that. I always thought it unfair that women were not accepted as members. In what way are they inferior to us? And such women as your wife. . . ."

"But you don't know her?"

"It is enough to see her."

Trubetskoy beamed all over, blushed and smiled again, a guilty and happy smile.

"Well, that's all right and enough about it," Golitsin concluded. "Time is going. Let us make haste and finish. And so, Trubetskoy, you think that the task is beyond our powers?"

"Yes, Golitsin. It is enough to have a drop of common sense to see how utterly impossible the whole thing is. . . . No one will venture upon it except those who have brought themselves to political insanity. . . ."

"Quite so, to insanity," echoed Golitsin. He ac-

quiesced all the time, trying to catch him, "testing" him. Obolensky, obviously pained, said nothing.

"I am very glad, gentlemen, that you understand me. I shall tell you straight out: to the last minute I hoped that if I remained in contact with the members of the Society, as a sort of chief, I should be able to avert the evil and to preserve at any rate some appearance of legality. But now heaven only knows what they think of doing: they want to exterminate all, all . . ." said Trubetskoy in a frightened whisper, not daring to utter the terrible words "to exterminate all the members of the Imperial family."

"And you don't want to exterminate all? or anyone?"

"No, I don't, I cannot, Golitsin. I am not born an assassin. . . ."

"What then is to be done, prince? You ought to give up your post as dictator, and perhaps leave the Society altogether?" Golitsin looked straight into his eyes with quiet mockery.

Trubetskoy did not answer; he must have suddenly become aware of the trap.

"Well, what do you say, prince? Eh? As an honest man you should answer straight yes or no; do you remain with us or leave us?" said Golitsin, this time with an unconcealed challenge.

"I really don't know . . . I must think about it."

"You will think about it? But you see, your excellency, the trouble is that there is no time for thinking: we begin to-morrow."

"To-morrow? How, to-morrow?" faltered Trubetskoy, staring at Golitsin with blank eyes.

"Oh, of course you do not yet know." Golitsin looked at him from under his spectacles with a jeer of malicious satisfaction, and as always at such moments

his face became heavy, as though made of stone, and looked like a mask. "The final courier has arrived from Warsaw with Constantine's abdication ; at seven o'clock to-morrow all the troops are to take the oath of allegiance ; we gather in the Senate Square and begin the rebellion. . . ."

"Rebe . . . rebe . . ." Trubetskoy wanted to say the word and could not ; the word stuck in his throat, his eyes opened wide, his face grew longer and turned pale, almost green, his thick lips trembled and he suddenly looked more than ever like a Jew.

"A regular Jew in a fright," thought Golitsin with disgust.

"Why don't you speak, sir ? Please answer me ! "

"Stop it, Golitsin, how dare you ! " Obolensky jumped up and ran to Trubetskoy. "It is a shame ! Don't you see ? "

Trubetskoy threw his head back and his eyes showed white. Obolensky unbuttoned the collar of his shirt for him.

"Water, quick ! "

Golitsin found a jug of water, poured out a glassful and gave it to Obolensky. Trubetskoy got hold of the sides of the tumbler with his lips and his teeth chattered against the glass. He could not manage to swallow for a long time. At last he drank some, threw back his head again, and breathed.

Obolensky bending over him stroked his head with his hand as he had done with Ryleyev that morning.

"Come, never mind, never mind, Trubetskoy ! Don't listen to Golitsin : he does not know you. We will have a talk to Ryleyev presently and manage somehow. All will be well, all will be well."

"But I am all right, it's nothing, it will pass off. It's

my heart. . . . I have not been well these last few days and I had some coffee this morning, so that must have done it. And then it was so sudden. . . . I cannot, when it's all of a sudden. . . . Excuse me, for Heaven's sake. . . ."

The reddish hair stuck to his moist forehead, the thick lips still trembled as they smiled, and there was in that smile something piteous, something childishly simple: Don Quixote awakened from his illusions, a sleep-walker who has fallen from the roof and smashed himself.

Golitsin suddenly felt ashamed, as though he had hurt a child. He turned away so as not to see. He was afraid of pity : he felt that if he began to pity, he would forgive everything, would acquit " the traitor."

" Listen, prince," he began, without looking at Trubetskoy.

" Look here, Golitsin," Obolensky interrupted him calmly and firmly, " I am commissioned by Ryleyev to bring Trubetskoy to him, and I will do so. And don't you disturb us, please ; leave us alone. Go to Ryleyev and tell him that we are coming."

" I only wanted to say. . . ."

" Go, Golitsin, go ! Do as you are told ! "

" Is it a command then ? "

" Yes, a command."

" I obey," said Golitsin, with an awkward smile, bowed dryly and went out. " All clever men are awful fools," he remembered the saying. He felt he was a clever fool at that moment.

" Yes, Trubetskoy *went away sorrowful*, like the rich man in the Gospel. But is he any worse than I, than we all ? Who knows what will happen to us to-morrow ? Perhaps we too will go away sorrowful ? " thought Golitsin.

VII

WHEN he returned to Ryleyev's, Ryleyev had already washed and shaved and, instead of the dressing-gown, was wearing a dark brown "puce" swallow-tail coat that looked smart though it was for everyday wear, a fashionable waistcoat made of a Turkish shawl, and a tall white cravat. As usual he grew animated when he began to talk to the visitors in the drawing-room, and the feverish brilliance of his eyes and the feverish colour in his cheeks made him look almost well.

Golitsin did not know the Ryleyev of that morning, but he recognized the Ryleyev of the old days : the thin, swarthy face, with high cheek-bones, rather like a gypsy's ; the enormous dark and clear eyes under the thick black eyebrows, the delicate feminine lips with a charming smile ; the curling hair carefully combed into rings and brushed over the temples, with an obstinate boyish tuft of hair sticking out at the back. And there was about him something light, flying, impetuous, like a flame caught up by the wind.

Obolensky and Trubetskoy came an hour after Golitsin. Ryleyev took them to his study, shut the door into the drawing-room where a lot of people had assembled by now, and at once began to talk of the rising.

"We are all relying upon you, Trubetskoy, to take measures in the present circumstances, for this is an opportunity that must not be missed."

"Do you really think of acting, Ryleyev ?"

"Certainly, certainly we must act ! The circumstances themselves call us to action now or never ! It is a unique opportunity, and if we do nothing we shall fully deserve to be called scoundrels," said Ryleyev,

looking straight at him. "And what do you think, prince?"

"I think we ought to find out first what is the spirit of the army and what means the Society has at its disposal."

"Whatever our means may be, to go back is impossible, we have gone too far. Perhaps we have been betrayed already and everything is already known. Here, read this," and Ryleyev gave him Rostovtsev's letter.

Trubetskoy hardly glanced at it: he could not read for agitation.

"Is this a denunciation, then?"

"You can see for yourself. The sheath is broken and the sword cannot be hidden. We are doomed to perish."

"But it is not ourselves only that will perish—we shall drag others to destruction. And we have no right to destroy others," Trubetskoy began, and thought "Now is the moment to say everything, to declare that I want to leave the Society." This was what he came for. But his tongue would not obey him: it was as impossible to say this as to insult an innocent man or to strike him on the face.

One bell after another was heard in the hall.

"Why are there so many callers?" asked Trubetskoy.

"They have heard about the courier," answered Ryleyev, and asked after a pause: "What force then, prince, do you consider sufficient?"

"Several regiments. At least six thousand men or at any rate one old regiment of the Guards, for a young regiment would not command a following."

"Then there is nothing to trouble about: I can answer for two regiments, the Moscovsky and the Grenadier Guards," exclaimed Ryleyev.

"These are mere words," said Obolensky. "You

should not speak so confidently : we cannot be certain of a single man."

Ryleyev glanced at Obolensky and made no answer, but merely shrugged his shoulders and began speaking of the plan of the rising.

The something light, flying, impetuous that there was in Ryleyev,—something like a flame caught up by the wind—was felt by all who were with him. It was as though he gave commands—and they could not help obeying.

As Trubetskoy listened to Ryleyev he, too, was carried away—thus a violin string, untouched by the bow, will answer the string that is sounding by the side of it. He began to develop his plan.

" My plan is this. As soon as the regiments are gathered together for the new oath of allegiance, and the soldiers refuse to take it, the officers are to lead them to the next regiment, and when the next joins them, to the following one and so on. When all or most regiments of the Guards are gathered together, they must ask for Tsarevitch Constantine to come. All the appearance of legality will in that case be preserved and the obstinacy of the soldiers will be regarded as loyalty, but the object of the Society will have been lost. But if the message to the Tsarevitch is not sent, we must go to the Senate and demand the issue of a manifesto declaring that men of all classes are to be elected in order to determine who is to occupy the throne and on what conditions. Meanwhile the Senate must appoint a provisional government until the Great Assembly of the people's representatives draws up a new Russian constitution. As soon as the manifesto is issued, the troops must at once leave the town and encamp near it, so that in the midst of rebellion they may preserve perfect order and quietness."

"Revolution made with rose-water," remembered Golitsin.

"It is an excellent plan, Trubetskoy," said Ryleyev, "only I am afraid it will take too long to go from regiment to regiment. And is it really necessary?"

"Certainly. How else is it to be done?"

"Why, go straight to the Square. I believe it is enough for one company to rebel and the revolution will take place. If only fifty people come, I will join them!" cried Ryleyev, and his eyes glowed with such a fire that Trubetskoy felt uneasy. He suddenly sank into silence and felt that he had been saying the wrong thing.

Behind the door there was a hum of voices. People were talking together, shouting, arguing. The words could not be heard, but there was such a noise that a fight seemed imminent.

Suddenly the door was noisily flung open and Prince Shchepin-Rostovsky, captain of the Moscovsky regiment of the Guards, burst into the room, red, perspiring, dishevelled, frantic; he looked as though he were drunk or mad.

"Damnation take you all, blackguards, cowards, traitors!" he roared, brandishing his fists. "Do what you like, and I . . ."

"Why do you shout, sir! We are not deaf." Ryleyev pulled him up calmly, and the man was discomfited for a moment.

"Look here, Ryleyev, I can't put up with them any more! There is no doing anything with these philanthropists. What we have to do is simply to cut throats, that's all! And if they won't do that, I shall be the first to go and denounce myself. . . ."

"Hold your tongue, damnation take you!" Ryleyev jumped up and stamped his feet. "Have you gone

crazy? And why do you burst in upon us? Don't you see we are busy? Go, go out!" He seized him by the shoulders and although he seemed small and weak by comparison with the huge Shchepin, he turned him round and pushed him out of the room so adroitly that Obolensky and Golitsin had not had time to realize what was happening before the whole thing was over.

They laughed. But Trubetskoy did not feel like laughing.

"There now, have you heard? What does this mean, Ryleyev, eh?" he faltered, turning pale.

"It's all right, Trubetskoy, don't trouble. It's only talk. I'll settle him. I've got him in hand. He is rough and noisy, but he has a good heart."

"A good heart and he wants to cut people's throats!" continued Trubetskoy. "And not he alone—all of them. They think of nothing but blood and murder. No, gentlemen, I cannot. . . . God sees my soul: I have never been a cut-throat or a malefactor and I cannot, I cannot, be a deliberate assassin."

"I wish to withdraw from the Society," he wanted to say and he could not—again his tongue would not obey him. The more he wanted to say it, the less he could.

"Well, I must be going." He got up suddenly and gave his hand to Ryleyev with strangely sudden haste.

"Where are you off to? Stay. We can't leave it at that. We have not yet decided."

"But why try to decide? We shall not come to any decision, any way."

"Well, perhaps you are right—we shall not. And maybe there is no need to decide. Circumstances will show. . . . All right then, with God's blessing! Till to-morrow?" Ryleyev put both hands on Trubetskoy's

shoulders and brought his face so near that Trubetskoy felt his breath. "You are not angry with me, Trubetskoy, are you? Don't be angry, my dear, for God's sake, don't!" He smiled a childishly tender smile. "I know, I know I am to blame! I made arrangements, didn't obey you, acted on my own. But there shall be no more of this, it is all over. To-morrow you are the dictator and I—a private, your faithful slave. If anyone dares so much as to murmur against you, I will kill him with my own hands! Well, Christ be with you!" He was going to put his arms round him, but Trubetskoy drew away and turned paler still. "Won't you even embrace me? You are angry, then?" and Ryleyev looked him straight in the eyes.

Trubetskoy was only thinking of getting away as quickly as possible: he was afraid he would faint again. Suddenly he flung his arms round Ryleyev and kissed him. "Betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?" he thought, and ran out of the room.

He recovered only on the landing. He felt that somebody was holding him by the skirt of his coat. He turned round and saw Obolensky, who was saying something. It took Trubetskoy a long time to understand him; at last he understood:

"But still, you will come to the Square to-morrow, won't you?"

He made an effort to control himself.

"But if some two companies turn up, nothing can come of it. I think it will all pass off quietly," he answered almost calmly.

"But still, you will come?" persisted Obolensky, holding him by the coat. Trubetskoy made no answer, tore himself free, rushed into the street, jumped into his carriage, and, telling the coachman to drive home,

closed the carriage door and huddled himself up in a corner, more dead than alive.

There was a smell of the tea-rose in the carriage—his wife's charming smell.

"She does not know yet! But she will learn it some day," he thought with a new terror.

"Still, you will be at the Square to-morrow," sounded in his ears once more.

He jumped up, put his hand to lower the window and was going to shout to the coachman, "Drive back to Ryleyev's." But he felt weak and exhausted, and sank on the pillows as though he had all at once become soft, fluid.

VIII

ON his way to Petersburg Golitsin had decided to put up at an hotel. But when he brought the two ladies he had travelled with from Moscow to the house of Natalya Kirillovna Rzhevsky, and, having safely delivered them into her charge, began to say good-bye, the old lady would not hear of his going to an hotel.

"What next, my dear sir! It is unheard of to let a man go from a respectable house to a tavern! Isn't there enough room for you here? The whole house is empty. Stay as long as you like. You are one of the family, you know."

Almost as soon as Golitsin was introduced to her, Natalya Kirillovna discovered that he was a very distant connection of hers.

Golitsin accepted the invitation readily, both because he thought he would be safer in her house, and because he did not want to part from Márinka.

The house stood in a quiet part of the town. With an old garden all round it, once kept in order but long

since allowed to run wild, it looked like a country mansion of some magnate of Catherine's time.

Natalya Kirillovna's only visitor was Foma Fomitch Fryndin, a retired brigadier of Suvarov's days. He was a little old man of pleasant appearance with eyes like a child's, pale blue like discoloured forget-me-nots, a childish smile and a soft and gentle voice. He must have been in love with Natalya Kirillovna in old days and remained faithful to her to the end of his life.

After the stormy meetings of the conspirators at which they talked of bloodshed, of rebellion, of Russia consumed by the flames of the revolution, Golitsin used to return to the old house as to a dreamland, as to a kingdom of shades. The dreams would vanish, the shades disappear—and there would be nothing to regret ; to sweep away, to demolish everything in the old house so that not a stone would be left upon stone, was the very thing he was working for. He did not want to feel any pity, and yet he felt it. It was as though the gentle shadows of the past passed before him for the last time, looking into his eyes with a soft complaint.

When, returning from Ryleyev's on December 13th, he came into the old lady's room, she was sitting as usual in a low arm-chair by a little table with two wax candles, playing an endless patience. Old Fryndin was reading a last year's newspaper, Nina Lvovna was knitting a scarf, and Márinka marking linen.

The room was very hot and smelt of fragrant resin, so that Golitsin, coming in from the fresh air, could hardly breathe at first. He bent down to kiss the old lady's hand. The lap-dog, Fidelka, barked and very nearly bit him on the leg. The parrot, half asleep in its cage, stirred, opened one eye, looked at Golitsin and muttered angrily, " Potap Potapitch Potapov."

Everything was just as usual : cosy, quiet, sleepy, immovable, unchangeable,—as in eternity.

" What have you been doing with yourself ? Why can't you sit still, my dear, instead of dragging yourself from house to house all day long ? " the old lady grumbled affectionately.

" I have been at my uncle's, Prince Alexander Nikolaevitch's. I have given him your greetings," lied Golitsin to stop further questions.

" Are you making it up ? I am sure the old man does not remember me."

" Yes, he does, grandmamma. He told me to give you his greetings and to kiss your hand." He bent down again, and Fidelka began to bark.

For a moment all were silent and everything grew still quieter, cosier, sleepier.

" *Marie*, don't spoil your eyes. You can't mark linen by candle-light," said Nina Lvovna.

Márinka made a few more stitches, secured the thread, bit off the end and put away the work.

" Come here, my child," called the old lady. " How is it you are so sad to-day ? And you are pale too. Aren't you well ? " She kissed her and stroked her cheek. " Though you are pale, you look very charming to-day ! "

And turning to Nina Lvovna, she added : " How charming our Márinka has grown. She ought to have a good husband—not your old crock Akvilonov. Give up your Birdcherrylands, my dear, come to live with me if you can put up with an old woman—you won't regret it. And I will find her a good husband."

Nina Lvovna made no answer and, looking down, moved her needles more rapidly.

" And when are you going to fulfil your promise,

Marya Pavlovna ? " asked Golitsin. He saw that she was not happy and wanted to get her away from the old lady.

" What promise, prince ? "

" To show me the knick-knacks."

" Oh yes. I shall be very pleased to, if grandmamma allows me."

" I would show them to you myself, my boy, but my legs ache to-day, I can't get up. Show them to him, Márinka."

The old lady liked showing visitors her knick-knacks and boasted of them like a child.

Márinka took Golitsin to a glass chiffonier, opened it and began showing the things—old snuff-boxes, lockets, cameos, dolls and cups of Dresden china, boxes that had contained sweets, powder, court-plaster.

" And what is this ? " asked Golitsin, pointing to a little article made of ivory and gold.

" A flea-catcher. You see there is a tube here with a lot of holes which are closed at the bottom and open at the top. A little rod smeared with honey is placed inside the tube, the fleas get into the holes, stick to the honey and are caught," explained Márinka. " Grandmamma says fashionable ladies used to wear these on the breast on a silk ribbon."

" Fancy inventing a thing like that ! " laughed Golitsin.

Márinka looked at him in silence, with quiet severity, and he understood that he ought not to have laughed : these poor mementos of a bygone age were dear to her. She herself was a little like them : in her own charm there was a fragrance of the past. No, one ought not to laugh at the past : we laugh at our grandparents, and our grandchildren will laugh at us ; each has its turn, and each has a flea-catcher of his own sort.

"Márinka, how can I speak to you alone?" he whispered quickly into her ear.

"Come a little later into the blue drawing-room," she answered also in a rapid whisper, shut the chiffonier and returned to the grandmamma. Golitsin quietly left the room.

The old lady's patience was coming to an end. Every one followed it with interest.

"Fulfilment of expectations and unfailing fortune!" solemnly announced the grandmamma, placing the last card.

"Foma Fomitch, would you be so kind as to help me to fix the embroidery frame," said Márinka.

"Why, what's the idea of doing it at night?" asked Nina Lvovna, in surprise.

"I want to begin to-morrow morning. The days are so short now, one no sooner sits down to work than it grows dark." Márinka blushed up to her ears—she was no good at telling lies—and to hide her face she bent over her mother and put her arms round her. "Please let me, mother darling!"

"Very well, go."

Passing several rooms lighted only by night-lights and ikon lamps, Márinka and Foma Fomitch came into the blue drawing-room. Here at the window by the embroidery frame sat Golitsin.

"Oh, it's you, prince!" said Márinka with feigned surprise and blushed again. "Foma Fomitch, do please excuse me for having troubled you! The prince will help me to fix the frame. I quite forgot that he had promised me to do so. . . ."

"Why, it's no trouble at all, my dear young lady! You stay with the prince here and I will go and rest in the arm-chair—I feel a bit sleepy. And I sleep very

lightly—so if anyone calls you or goes past, I will tell you at once. *Tout à vos ordres, mademoiselle,*" and the old man bowed gallantly.

He understood. He loved Márinka as if she were his own daughter, could not endure Akvilonov, and considered Golitsin as the best possible husband for Márinka.

When Foma Fomitch went out, Márinka sat down at the frame and bent over it, carefully examining the embroidery. Golitsin sat down beside her. Both were silent.

"Well, what is it, prince? Speak, I am listening." She could not help smiling, nor could he. And once more, as in the coach from Moscow to Petersburg, they were looking at each other, smiling and saying nothing, conscious that the silence was drawing them together into an intimacy that grew irresistibly. It was as though after a long parting they came together again, and with a happy wonder remembered and recognized one another.

"Do you remember, Márinka, you said to me the other day, that perhaps you are not engaged. Well, are you or are you not?"

"Why do you want to know?" She bent again over the embroidery.

"Márinka dear, you know why." He took her hand and she did not draw it away, only bent her head still lower so that the long curls that hung along her cheeks almost completely hid her face. She knew that her fate was being decided at that moment. She wanted to conceal her emotion, and could not. Her heart was beating so violently that she thought he would hear it.

"What is the matter with you? What is the matter

with you, Márinka? Why don't you want to talk to me as you used to? Why are you like this?"

"Like what? No, I am all right. . . . One can't always play and be foolish. I am not a child, you know. It is time I behaved sensibly. Life is no laughing matter."

"Well, if you don't want to talk to me, don't. Only believe, whatever happens, believe, Márinka, that you have a friend. Do you believe it? This at least you do believe, don't you?"

"Why, of course. . . ." She wanted to smile as before and could not. "I almost believe it," she brought out with a different smile—a pale faint one.

"Almost? Can one almost believe? But I suppose there is nothing for it. I evidently have not deserved better." He smiled bitterly, and let go her hand.

They were silent again and both felt wretched; both were conscious that they were saying the wrong thing; words were dividing them, as though after a brief meeting they were being parted for ever again.

"Is that all, prince, that you wanted to tell me?"

"No, not all. The main thing is this: When you come to decide with Mr. Akvilonov, remember that you are free: the debt on the estate has been paid and now no one can take Birdcherrylands from you. Decide as you like; you are free, Márinka."

Joy lighted up her eyes for an instant, and then went out as suddenly.

"What are you saying, prince? The debt is paid? By whom?"

"That doesn't matter."

"Doesn't matter! My fate is being decided, and I don't know who . . ."

"But, good heavens, this is not the point! Well,

if you insist on knowing who it was . . ." faltered Golitsin, and suddenly became red and confused like a little boy. "Well, then, Foma Fomitch paid it—there!"

"Foma Fomitch? But where did he get the money from? He is poorer than we are."

"I really don't know where from. From the grandmamma, I suppose. . . ."

"From grandmamma? Why, only this morning mother was talking to her, asking if she would pay a part of it at least, and grandmamma refused point-blank. Why do you say what isn't true, prince? What is in your mind?" Márinka looked long and attentively at him. "Valeryan Mihailovitch, tell me, tell me at once who paid the money; if you don't tell me God only knows what I shall imagine. . . ."

He was silent, and all of a sudden she understood. She turned pale and got up, not taking her eyes off him.

"So it was you? Oh, thank you, prince! You are very kind. You took pity on a poor girl, became her benefactor. . . . But has it not occurred to you that poor as we are we may not want to accept your present . . . your alms? If you had a drop of respect—let alone friendship—to mother and me, you would not have done it. But it's my own fault. I allowed you . . . silly creature that I am . . . silly . . . silly. . . ."

She covered her face with her hands, sank on to a chair and burst into tears. Her delicate shoulders were shaking. The fichu got out of its place and left bare her slender neck and girlish bosom; and as her breast heaved with sobs the fine collar-bones, also like a child's, stood out under the brown skin.

"Idiot! idiot! what have I done!" Golitsin clutched at his head. He could not tell what was more

important to him at that moment—the liberation of Russia, the rising, the revolution, or this weeping girl.

Márinka got up and walked to the door without uncovering her face. Golitsin rushed to her.

"Márinka . . . Marya Pavlovna, stay, stay, don't go, let me speak, listen to me, for God's sake, listen!"

"Let me go! Let me go!"

But he did not let her go, he held her hands.

"Do, do let me tell you! I can't leave it like this, Márinka! There, you are going away, and we may never see each other again."

She stopped and listened.

"Just a minute . . . I only want. . . . But sit down, sit down," he implored her, pulling her by the hand.

She submitted, followed him and sat down at the old place.

"Fool that I am! All clever people are awful fools—this has been said of me," he hurried, getting confused and mixed up. "Well, I don't care if I am a fool! But had I known that it would turn out like this . . . do you really take me for such a scoundrel? You don't know, Márinka, what my circumstances are just now. I am going off my head, Márinka. . . . I cannot bear that you should ruin yourself, for Akvilonov is ruination, worse than any ruination. You said just now that you almost believed I was your friend. . . . Well, if your friend, almost friend, were going to death, to a duel from which he might not return, and wanted to do something for you—to pay that accursed mortgage on the Birdcherrylands so as to save you from perdition—would you not accept it, would you refuse a dying man his last request?"

She stopped crying, took her hands from her face and, not yet taking in the words, listened to his voice, gazed

into his face, simple, charming, childish, and so piteous that again, as in the first moments of their friendship, her heart shrank with fear as though feeling that danger was in store for this man and that she must help him, warn him, save him.

"I knew it! I knew it!" she cried, clasping her hands. "Tell me, tell me at once! What does it mean? What death? What duel?"

"Don't ask me, Márinka. I may not tell you."

"Your betrothed?"

"What betrothed?"

"Have you forgotten again? You are engaged. . . ."

"I am not engaged. Why, I told you. . . ."

"You said you weren't, but perhaps you are?"

"Why do you distrust me, Márinka? Don't you see that I am speaking the truth?"

"What is it then, what? Tell me! Why do you torment me? How you hurt me!"

"I may not tell you," repeated Golitsin.

Márinka had heard from Foma Fomitch that "these were dreadful times"—the Emperor Constantine had abdicated and the troops had to swear allegiance to Nicolas, and if they would not, there might be a mutiny. "Is that it?" she thought with prophetic terror.

"It was not true what I said to you just now, that I almost believed you. Not almost, but quite. And whatever happens I shall always believe you. Only it is terrible, so terrible—to know and not to know. What will become of me, good God! Valeryan Mihailovitch, dear, and is there no escaping it?"

"No, Márinka, there isn't."

"And when is it to be?"

"I don't know. Soon. Perhaps to-morrow."

"To-morrow? Then you will go away—and we may never see each other again?"

She turned pale, bent down and put her hands on his shoulders. He sank on his knees and put his arms round her waist.

"My own, my own, my love, my only one!" He suddenly remembered Sofya. Was he betraying the one in heaven for the one on earth? But no, there was no treachery. He loved in both—in the earthly and in the heavenly—the One only.

"You will go and we shall never, never, never see each other again!" she repeated, weeping, yet these were no longer the old bitter tears, but the new sweet tears of love.

"Yes, Márinka, we shall meet. And if we do, you won't forsake me?"

She bent still lower over him, put her face so near his that he felt her breath. They were looking at each other in silence, smiling, and again they remembered, they recognized each other as in a prophetic dream of immemorably long ago. Their smiles got nearer and nearer, and at last merged into a kiss.

"My own! My own! My own!" he kept repeating, as if this one word contained all that he felt. "Bless me, Márinka. Perhaps it is for you too that I am going to die."

"Why for me?"

"You shall know later."

"May you not tell that either?"

"No, I mayn't. Do bless me."

"Well, Christ be with you! Preserve, help, save him, Mother Immaculate!" She blessed him with the same words as Sofya had done once and kissed him, this time with motherly tenderness.

"Yes, Mother, Mother Immaculate," he thought. "My own mother-earth. Mother and Bride together. I will go to crucifixion, to death for her—for Russia, the Mother Immaculate!"

IX

ON the night of December 13th the conspirators met for the last time in Ryleyev's small rooms. During the night they crowded there as in the daytime, coming and going. But they did not shout or argue any more; the conversation was quiet, the faces solemn; all felt that the decisive moment had come.

An elderly man in a worn green coat, a high white cravat and tortoise-shell rimmed spectacles, with a face that seemed hard and dry but was in truth dreamy and enthusiastic, Baron Vladimir Ivanovitch Steingel, a retired clerk in the office of the Moscow Governor-General and one of the oldest members of the Northern Society, was reading indistinctly and haltingly from a rough copy full of corrections:

"The Senate is to issue a manifesto declaring—
The abolition of the former government.
The appointment of a provisional government—
until a permanent one is established.
Free press and abolition of censorship.
Freedom of all religious cults.
Equality of all classes before the law.
Abolition of serfdom.
Publicity of legal procedure.
Introduction of trial by jury.
Abolition of a standing army."

"But how are we to get all this done?" asked somebody.

" Very simply," answered Steingel. " We will force the Synod and the Senate to proclaim the Supreme Duma of the Secret Society the Provisional Government, possessed of unlimited powers ; we will distribute ministries, army corps and other departments among the members of the Society and will arrange for the election of popular representatives whose duty it will be to establish the new order of government in the whole of Russia."

Every one who entered these small rooms at once became drunk, as though a strong wine had gone to his head ; the sense of power took one's breath away : whatever they wished, they could do ; whatever they decided, would be carried out.

" Nothing will come of it," thought Golitsin. " But perhaps it will. Madmen, sleep-walkers, schemers, but perhaps prophets as well. Perhaps all this is not the fulfilment but only the symbol ; a far-off thunder and not the storm. But where thunder has been there will be lightning too."

" The town of Nizhni-Novgorod under the name of Slaviansk will be Russia's new capital," Steingel announced.

Screwing up his eyes, Golitsin watched the light of the wax candles burning dimly in the clouds of tobacco smoke and it seemed to him that he was already seeing the golden domes of Slaviansk, the City that was to come, the Zion of Russian freedom.

" What is the plan of the rising ? " he asked.

" Our plan is this," answered Ryleyev. " We must speak against the oath of allegiance, shout in the regiments that Constantine has been forced to abdicate and that his letter is not sufficient, that he must issue a manifesto, or better still, come himself. And when the regiments have mutinied, we will lead them straight to the Square."

"Success is certain! Success is certain!" shouted every one.

"Well, and what are we going to do in the Square?" asked Obolensky.

"We will put before the Senate the manifesto about the constitutional government, and then go straight to the palace and arrest the Imperial family."

"It is easy to say—arrest them. But what if they escape? The palace is big, and there are many exits from it."

"It would not be amiss to get the plan of it," suggested Batenkov.

"The Imperial family is not a needle: they won't be able to hide when it comes to the arrest," laughed Bestuzhev.

"Of course we do not think that the mere seizure of the palace will settle everything," continued Ryleyev. "But if the Tsar escapes with all his family, that will be sufficient: then all the Guards will follow us. We must deal the first blow, and then confusion will give us a new opportunity to act. Remember, friends, the success of a revolution lies in one word only—dare!" he exclaimed and, like a flame driven by the wind,—light, flying, brilliant, tremulously impetuous—he looked more beautiful at that moment than ever before.

"You know nothing whatever of the Russian soldier, young men, and I know him through and through," began Captain Yakubovitch, the Caucasian hero, a spare dark-skinned man, rather like a gypsy, with a black bandage on his head where he had a gunshot wound. "You must begin by breaking open the taverns, and when the people are thoroughly drunk, let them—the soldiers with bayonets and the peasants with axes—do a little plundering and set fire to the town on all sides

so that there would be no trace of the Germans left ; then take from some church the sacred banners and go in a religious procession to the palace, seize the Tsar, proclaim a republic—and the thing will be done ! "

" Splendid ! Splendid ! That's what I like ! To the devil with the wretched philanthropists ! " roared the rowdy Prince Shchepin. " Quick ! Quick ! No use waiting for the morning ! Let us go at once, this very minute ! "

He jumped up—and the others did the same as though they were really ready to run off without themselves knowing where and with what object.

" What is the matter with you, gentlemen ? Where are you off to, now, in the night ? The soldiers won't stir until the oath of allegiance is to be taken. And don't you see that Yakubovitch is joking ? "

" No, I am not. Though if you like to take it as a joke. . . . " Yakubovitch smiled ambiguously.

" No, friends, preparing for a great action we must not have recourse to low means. For clean work one should have clean hands. The holy flame of liberty must remain unsoiled ! " Ryleyev began again, and gradually every one came to his senses and calmed down.

In the corner by the stove, at a little table covered with bottles, sat Pushchin and Kühelbeker. They were talking of Schelling's *Philosophy of Nature*.

The retired army lieutenant Kahovsky, with a lean hungry face and with features so heavy that they seemed made of stone, with a haughtily protruding lower lip and the piteous eyes of a sick child or of a dog that has lost its master, paced from the drawing-room to the study and back again, always in the same line, from the stove to the window, up and down, up and down, with the wearisome monotony of a pendulum.

"Do keep still, Kahovsky," Pushchin called to him. But Kahovsky went on pacing up and down and made no answer, as though he had not heard.

"The concrete and the abstract are one and the same, but in a dual form. The idea of this perfect unity is the Absolute. The ultimate condition of all conditions is the Unconditional. Do you understand now?" asked Kühelbeker.

"I don't understand a word. And what an extraordinary man you are! Thinking of these things at such a moment! Well, and will you come to the Square to-morrow?"

Kahovsky suddenly stopped and listened.

"I will."

"And will you shoot?"

"I will."

"And how about your Absolute?"

"My Absolute is in complete agreement with this. There must be an eternal struggle between good and evil. Knowledge and virtue are one and the same. Knowledge is life and life is knowledge. To act well, we must think well!" exclaimed Kühelbeker; and, ungainly, absurd, clumsy, but illumined by an inward light, he looked almost beautiful at that moment.

"You darling Unconditional Absolute! My dear long-legged heron!" laughed Pushchin, and leaned over to kiss him.

"You are wrong to laugh," Kahovsky suddenly interposed. "He is saying the very thing that is needed. Everything else is nonsense in comparison. If it is worth while to make a revolution at all, it is only for this. If one is to live, the world as a whole must be justified!" Bending down, he menacingly raised his forefinger before Pushchin's face; then straightened

himself, sharply turned on his heels, and again began pacing to and fro like a pendulum.

It was late. The page-boy Filka had long been snoring, huddled up in an unnatural position on the tin convex lid of the clothes-box in the hall, under the coat rack. The guests were going away. A few people gathered in Ryleyev's study to make the last arrangements.

"But you know, gentlemen, we have not settled the main point after all," said Yakubovitch.

"What is the main point?" asked Ryleyev.

"Don't you know? What we are to do with the Tsar and the Imperial family, that's the main point," answered Yakubovitch, looking at him intently.

Ryleyev said nothing, and though his eyes were cast down, he felt that they were all looking at him and waiting.

"They must be seized and detained under guard till the convention of the Great Assembly, which will decide who is to reign and on what conditions," he answered at last.

"Under guard?" Yakubovitch shook his head doubtfully. "But who is to guard the Tsar? Don't you realize that the sentries will be intimidated by his single glance? No, Ryleyev, the arrest of the Tsar would certainly lead to our undoing or to the undoing of Russia—civil war."

"And what do you yourself think, Yakubovitch?" Golitsin, who had been silent all the time, asked suddenly. He had been annoyed for some time by Yakubovitch's mocking air: "he is mocking and boasting, but I shouldn't wonder if he really were afraid!" he thought.

"Why ask me? I will fall in with the others," replied Yakubovitch evasively.

"No, answer me straight. You asked the question, and you must answer." Golitsin grew more and more angry.

"Very good. Well, gentlemen, if there are no other means, here are six of us. . . ."

Kahovsky, still pacing up and down, entered the study and, coming as far as the window, turned to go back, but suddenly stopped again and listened.

"No, seven," continued Yakubovitch, glancing at Kahovsky. "Let us draw lots—the one who draws it must kill the Tsar or be killed."

"Perhaps he is not boasting after all," thought Golitsin and remembered Ryleyev's words: "I know Yakubovitch for a man who despises his life and is always ready to sacrifice it."

"Well, gentlemen, do you agree?" Yakubovitch looked from one to the other with a sneer.

All were silent.

"Do you imagine it is so easy to raise the hand against the Tsar?" Batenkov brought out at last.

"No, I don't think it is. It is not the same thing to make an attempt on the life of the Tsar as on the life of an ordinary person. . . ."

"On the sacred person of the Tsar and Emperor!" said Golitsin mockingly, getting angry again. But Yakubovitch misunderstood him.

"That's it, that's it!" he continued. "The sacred person, God's anointed! We all have it in the blood. Revolutionaries, atheists, but still we are Russian, Christian people. We are not blackguards or cowards—we are all ready to die for the good of our country. But when it comes to killing the Tsar, the hand will refuse to obey, the heart will fail us. It is more difficult to kill the Tsar in one's heart than in the street. . . ."

"Hush! Be quiet!" Kahovsky cried out suddenly and so unexpectedly that every one looked round at him with surprise.

"What is the matter with you, Kahovsky?" Yakubovitch was too surprised to be offended. "At whom are you shouting?"

"At you, at you! Be quiet! Don't you dare to talk of it! Mind what you are about!" He shook his fist at him and was going to add something else, but merely waved his hand, and muttering to himself: "Oh, the damned babblers!" turned round and as though nothing had happened, went back from the study into the hall. Again he began pacing up and down, swaying to and fro like a pendulum, his face looking like the face of a man asleep.

"A sleep-walker," thought Golitsin.

"Has he gone crazy?" Yakubovitch jumped up in a fury. Ryleyev retained him by the hand.

"Leave him alone. Don't you see he does not himself know what he is saying."

At that moment Kahovsky came into the study again. Yakubovitch looked at him intently, and swore.

"Tfoo! Madman! Take care, Ryleyev, he will get you into trouble!"

"You are mistaken, Yakubovitch," said Golitsin calmly. "Kahovsky is in his right mind. And he said that which needed saying."

"Needed saying? What needed saying? Speak properly, damn you!"

"We have spoken enough. Speaking much means doing little."

"Have you also gone crazy, Golitsin?"

"Look here, sir, I am not fond of quarrelling. But if you are bent on it. . . ."

"There, that's enough! This isn't the time for quarrelling. You should be ashamed, gentlemen!" said Ryleyev with such bitter reproach that both Golitsin and Yakubovitch immediately came to themselves.

"You are right, Ryleyev!" said Golitsin. "Morning is wiser than evening. To-morrow will judge between us all. And now it is time to go home!"

He got up, and so did every one else. Ryleyev saw them off to the entrance. There, standing with their overcoats on, they began to talk again—in the Russian fashion. The snoring Filka was roused and sent to the kitchen, so as not to be in the way.

They all felt as though after the conversation about killing the Tsar everything had once more got confused—they had not come to any decision, and never would.

"The measures we have taken are very indefinite and inexact," Batenkov began.

"But we can't have a rehearsal, you know," observed Bestuzhev.

"The troops will come out into the Square and then we shall see. We will act according to circumstances," Ryleyev concluded.

"It is no use arguing now, our business is to obey the chief's orders," confirmed Bestuzhev. "By the way, where is he himself, our chief? Why does he keep in hiding?"

"Trubetskoy is not very well to-day," explained Ryleyev.

"But to-morrow . . . he will be at the Square to-morrow all the same, won't he?"

A look of fear came into all the faces.

"What next, Bestuzhev!" said Ryleyev, with such sincere indignation that every one felt reassured.

" Well, friends, God will see to all the rest. Good-bye and good luck ! " said Obolensky.

Yakubovitch, Bestuzhev and Batenkov went out together. Golitsin and Obolensky were standing in the entrance, taking leave of Ryleyev.

Kahovsky, who was still walking up and down in the drawing-room, seeing at last that everybody was going away, also came into the hall and began putting on his overcoat. His face had the same drowsy look as ever—the face of a " sleep-walker."

Ryleyev went up to him :

" What is the matter with you, Kahovsky ? Aren't you well ? "

" Yes, I am all right. Good-bye." He shook hands, turned round and took a step towards the door.

" Don't go just yet, I want a word with you." Ryleyev stopped him.

Kahovsky frowned.

" Ugh, talking again ! What for ? "

" Well, I can do without words."

Ryleyev took him aside, pulled something out of his side pocket and thrust it into his hand.

" What is it ? " asked Kahovsky in surprise, and raised his hand. There was a dagger in it.

" Have you forgotten ? " asked Ryleyev.

" No, I remember," answered Kahovsky. " Well, thank you for the honour ! "

This was the sign that had been agreed upon long ago : the one who receives the dagger is chosen by the Supreme Council of the Secret Society to assassinate the Tsar.

Ryleyev laid both his hands on Kahovsky's shoulders and spoke solemnly ; the words had obviously been thought out beforehand, perhaps for the benefit of posterity :

"Dear friend, you are alone on this earth. I know how self-sacrificing you are. You can be of more use than in the streets: kill the Tsar."

Ryleyev was going to embrace him, but Kahovsky drew away.

"How am I to do it?" he asked calmly, as it were thoughtfully.

"Put on an officer's uniform, and early in the morning, before the mutiny, go to the palace and kill him there. Or in the Square when he comes there," said Ryleyev.

Something seemed to be slowly opening in Kahovsky's face, as when a man tries to wake up and cannot; at last it was opened. There was a gleam of consciousness in his eyes as though he had only just realized with whom and about what he was speaking. The sleep-walker woke up.

"Very well," he said, turning pale, but as calmly and thoughtfully as before. "I shall kill him, and you —all the others? Have you made up your mind to kill all the others?"

"But why all the others?" whispered Ryleyev, also turning pale.

"Why? You used to say yourself that one was not enough, all should be killed."

Ryleyev had never said it and was afraid even to think of it.

He was silent. And Kahovsky, paler than ever, seemed to pierce him with his glowing eyes.

"Well, why are you silent? Speak. Can't you bring yourself to say it? It cannot be said, but it may be done?"

His face was suddenly distorted; his mouth was twisted into a smile and the haughtily protruding upper lip began to tremble.

"Well, thank you for the honour! You could find no one better, so I came in useful! And what about the rest of you? Is it that you don't want to soil your hands? Why, of course not! You are honest honourable men! And I—you have only to whistle for me! One destined for crime. An outcast! A low instrument of murder! A dagger in your hands!"

"What are you talking about, Kahovsky! No one forces you. You yourself wanted to . . ."

"Yes, myself! I will do whatever I myself choose! I will sacrifice myself for my country, but not for you, not for the Society. I will not be a stepping-stone for anyone. Oh, the meanness of it! You prepared me to be a dagger in your hands, you lost your reason in persuading me. You thought you were very subtle, but you were so crude that I don't know what fool could have failed to see through you! You have sharpened your dagger, but mind you don't prick yourself against it!"

"Petya dear, what are you saying!" Ryleyev clasped his hands and stretched them out to him imploringly. "Aren't we all together? Aren't you one of us?"

"No, I am not, I am not! I never have been, and never shall be one of you! I am alone, alone, alone!"

He could not go on—his breath failed him. He was trembling all over, as in a fit. His face darkened and looked terrible, like the face of one possessed.

"There's your dagger for you! And if you ever dare, I'll . . ." with one hand he raised the dagger over Ryleyev's head and with the other seized him by the collar. Obolensky and Golitsin were going to rush to Ryleyev's assistance, but Kahovsky threw down the dagger—the blade clinked as it struck the floor—

pushed Ryleyev away with such force that he nearly fell, and ran out on to the staircase.

For a moment Ryleyev stood still, overwhelmed. Then he ran after him, and bending over the banisters, called with desperate appeal :

" Kahovsky ! Kahovsky ! Kahovsky ! " But there was no answer. Only somewhere in the distance a heavy gate, probably the one from the yard into the street, banged with a loud noise.

Ryleyev stood for another minute, as though waiting for something ; then came back to the hall.

All three were silent with their eyes on the ground, trying not to look each other in the face.

" Madman ! " Ryleyev brought out at last. " Yakubovitch is right : he will make trouble and ruin us all."

" Nonsense ! He won't ruin anyone except himself," retorted Obolensky. " Unhappy man. We are all unhappy, but he more than anyone. At a moment like this, he is all alone. Alone to face the suffering for the sake of all—there is no greater suffering on earth. . . . And whatever did you insult him for, Ryleyev ? "

" I insulted him ? "

" Yes, you. How can you say to a man ' Go and kill ' ! "

" It cannot be said, but it may be done ? " Ryleyev repeated Kahovsky's words with a bitter smile.

Obolensky started and turned white, then red as that afternoon in conversation with Golitsin.

" I don't know if it may be done. But it is better to commit murder oneself than to tell another man to do it," he brought out in a low voice with a terrible effort.

And again all three were silent. Ryleyev sank down

on the box under the coat rack—Filka's resting-place—rested his elbows on his knees and leaned his head upon his hands.

Obolensky sat down by his side and stroked him on the head like a sick child, with gentle tenderness.

The silence lasted a long time.

At last Ryleyev raised his head. He looked as ill as he had done that morning ; he had all at once grown paler, thinner, seemed to have sunk down ; as it were, to have burnt out ; the fire had turned to ashes.

" It is hard, brothers, hard ! More than one can bear ! " he moaned with a stifled sob.

" And do you remember, Ryleyev," Obolensky began, still stroking his head with gentle tenderness. " A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come : but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world."

" What words ! " said Ryleyev in surprise. " Who said that ? "

" Have you forgotten ? Well, never mind, it will come back to you some day. And another thing, listen : ' Ye now have sorrow, but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.' That's how it is, Ryleyushka : there will be sorrow and there will be joy too, and our joy no one will take from us ! "

Tears glistened in Ryleyev's eyes and he smiled through his tears. He got up and laid his hand on Golitsin's shoulder.

" Do you remember, Golitsin, how you once said to me : ' Though you don't believe in God, may God help you ' ? "

" Yes, I do."

"Well, say it again," Ryleyev began, and did not finish,—he suddenly blushed and was shy.

But Golitsin understood, made the sign of the cross over him and said :

"God help you, Ryleyev ! Christ be with you ! Christ be with us all ! "

Ryleyev put one arm round Golitsin, another round Obolensky, drew them both to himself, and their lips met in a kiss.

Through fear, through pain, through the anguish of crucifixion they were conscious of a great joy, and they already knew that that joy no man would take from them.

Part Two

I

"WITH Peter began a revolution in Russia which is continuing to this day." These words which Pushkin once said to Pestel came into Golitsin's mind when on the morning of December 14th he went into the Senate Square and looked at Peter's monument.

The grey, still, foggy morning seemed undecided which way to turn—to frost or to thaw. The Admiralty thrust its spire into the low sky like a pin into white cotton-wool. The bridges across the Neva led to a white wall, and it seemed that there beyond the river there was nothing but white mist and emptiness—the end of heaven and earth, the edge of the world. And the Bronze Horseman on his steed of bronze was galloping into this white outer darkness.

Golitsin walked up and down the embankment, keeping an eye on the empty Square. He saw from a distance Ivan Ivanovitch Pushchin and went up to him.

"Wasn't it fixed for eight o'clock?" asked Golitsin.

"Yes, it was," answered Pushchin.

"But it is close upon nine, isn't it? And no one there?"

"No one."

"What has become of them all?"

"I don't know."

"What is Ryleyev doing?"

"Sleeping, I should think. He always sleeps late."

"I only pray we don't sleep too late for Russian freedom!"

They stood in silence for a time, then walked about, expecting some one else to turn up.

No, there was no one.

"Well, I am going," said Pushchin.

"Where to?" asked Golitsin.

"Home."

Pushchin went away, and Golitsin continued pacing up and down.

All at once he felt bored, sick, cold. He left the embankment and went into a coffee-house at the corner of the Nevsky.

Two lamps were burning there—the daylight hardly penetrated through the semi-basement windows; the room was hot; there was a smell of freshly-baked bread and coffee. The noise of billiard balls came from the next room.

Golitsin sat down at a little table and ordered some tea. At the table next to him two young clerks were reading aloud the manifesto about Nicolas's accession.

An officer of the Horse Guards came in, clanking his sword, and asked the Frenchwoman at the counter for a pound of lemon drops.

Golitsin recognized him as Prince Alexander Ivanovitch Odoevsky, greeted him and took him aside.

"Where do you come from?"

"From the palace. I have been on duty all night."

"Well, what is happening?"

"Nothing at all. Count Miloradovitch has just been to the Tsar with his report: the standards are returning from all the regiments, all the army has already been sworn in, and indeed the whole town—the churches have been crammed full all the morning. The count is in high spirits, just as if it were his name-day, and is inviting every one to lunch at the theatrical director's, and then to Teleshova's, the ballet dancer's."

"And you think, Sasha?"

" I don't think anything. If the military governor lunches with a ballet dancer, it means that all is quiet in the town."

The French lady gave Odoevsky his pound of sweets tied up with a pink ribbon.

" Where are you off to ? " asked Golitsin.

" Home."

" What are you going to do ? "

" To lie on the sofa and suck lemon drops. I can't think of anything more sensible ! " laughed Odoevsky, pressed Golitsin's hand and went out.

And Golitsin sat down to the table once more. He was tired, his eyes were heavy, his eyelids seemed glued together. " I mustn't go to sleep," he thought.

White stuffy cotton-wool seemed to fill the room. Márinka was somewhere near, and he was calling to her. But the cotton-wool deadened his voice.

He was wakened by a sudden noise. Every one had jumped up, run to the windows and was looking out at the street. But through the low windows almost on a level with the pavement one could only see the feet of running men.

" Where are they making for ? "

" Some one has been run over ! "

" Robbed ! "

" Fire ! "

" Mutiny ! "

Golitsin also jumped up and nearly knocking some one down, rushed like mad into the street.

" Mutiny ! Mutiny ! " were the shouts he heard in the running crowd as he ran with it along the Admiralty Square towards the Gorohovy.

" Ah ! it's a dreadful thing ! "

" But what is it ? "

" The Guards have mutinied, they won't swear allegiance to Nicolas."

" They are cutting down those who are for Nicolas, and those who are for Constantine they take with them."

" But who is Tsar, tell me that ? "

" Nicolas ! "

" Constantine ! "

" We have no Tsar ! "

" Dreadful, dreadful ! "

When Golitsin had run as far as the Gorohovy, he heard in the distance the drum and the dull roar of voices, like the roar of an approaching storm. It came nearer and nearer—and all of a sudden the earth echoed with the thud of thousands, the air quivered with the deafening shouts :

" Hurrah ! hurrah ! hurrah, Constantine ! "

Bending forward, so low that they seemed to be falling, with fixed bayonets and streaming colours, a battalion of the Moscovsky regiment of the Life Guards were rushing along as though going into an attack or to storm an invisible fortress.

" Hurrah ! hurrah ! hurrah ! " the soldiers shouted frantically, their mouths and eyes wide open, their necks stretched, the veins standing out with the effort, as though with this shout they were lifting some enormous weight.

The crowd kept pace with the soldiers. Street urchins yelled, whistled and jumped about like little devils. And in front of the battalion three big devils were dashing along : Alexander and Mihail Bestuzhev, holding three-cornered hats at the points of their naked swords, and Prince Shchepin-Rostovsky, brandishing a blood-stained sabre—he had just hacked three men to death.

Stumbling and treading on the skirts of his coat, holding in his hand the spectacles that had dropped off his nose, Golitsin ran with the others, shouting with frantic enthusiasm :

" Hurrah, Constantine ! "

II

FROM the Gorohovy they turned to the left, into the Senate Square. Here, by the monument of Peter, they stopped and formed in a military column, with the front to the Admiralty and the rear to the Senate. They placed a cordon of pickets. Within the column they fixed the banner, and the members of the Secret Society assembled round it.

Here, behind the steel barrier of the bayonets, it felt as secure as in a fortress ; and cosy, warm with the warmth of human breath. The soldiers smelt of barracks—of rye-bread, tobacco and coarse cloth—and Odoevsky, " his mamma's darling," of fine scent, Parma violet ; and it seemed to Golitsin that there was something of an omen in the combination of these two smells.

The members of the Secret Society embraced and kissed each other three times, as on Easter morning. All the faces had suddenly changed, become new. They recognized each other and yet they did not, as though they had met in the next world. They spoke hastily, interrupting one another and as incoherently as though they were drunk or delirious.

" Well, Sasha, it's fine, isn't it ? " Golitsin asked Odoevsky, who had heard of the mutiny on his way home from the coffee-house and rushed to the Square.

" Fine, Golitsin, awfully fine ! I had no idea it would be so fine ! " answered Odoevsky, and as he

straightened his cloak that had fallen off from one shoulder, he dropped on the ground a packet of sweets tied with a pink ribbon.

"Ah, the lemon drops!" laughed Golitsin. "Well, are you going to lie on the sofa and suck sweets, you rascal?"

He was laughing that he might not cry for joy. "I will marry Márinka, I certainly will," he thought suddenly, and was surprised at himself. "What am I thinking of? I am going to die directly. . . . Well, never mind, if I don't die I will marry her."

Pushchin came up. He and Golitsin also kissed each other three times, as at Easter.

"So it has begun after all, Pushchin?"

"It has."

"And do you remember you used to say that it was no use even thinking of it for another ten years?"

"Well, it appears we have begun without thinking."

"And have we done wrong?"

"No, quite right."

"All will be well, all will be well!" Obolensky kept repeating, also as though in delirium but with such a radiant smile that looking at him made every one feel light-hearted.

Wilhelm Kühelbeker, clumsy, awkward, looking like a wounded heron, was telling how the driver had tipped him out of the sledge on his way to the Square.

"Did you hurt yourself?"

"No, I fell right into the snow, it was soft. I only hope my pistol has not got wet."

"Are you sure you know how to shoot?"

"I aimed at a crow and hit a cow."

"What queer things happen to you!"

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"They, too, are laughing that they may not cry for joy," thought Golitsin.

It was like some giants' game: immense and terrible as death, and yet innocent and amusing like children's mischief.

Prince Shchepin suddenly looked weak and apathetic after his fury earlier in the morning; he was sitting on a low stone post, scrutinizing his hands in blood-stained white gloves; he tried to take them off, but could not, they stuck fast; he tore them off and threw them away and then began to rub his hands with snow to wash off the blood.

"All will be well." Odoevsky repeated Obolensky's words, pointing to Shchepin: "Is this also well?"

"Yes, this too. This is inevitable," answered Golitsin, and, for some reason, speaking of *this*, made him look at Kahovsky.

Dressed in a sheepskin coat, girt with a red sash in which were thrust a dagger and two pistols, Kahovsky stood at a distance from all the others, alone as usual. No one came up or spoke to him. Probably feeling that Golitsin was looking at him, he, too, glanced at him, and a quiver passed over his lean, hungry face, so heavy that it seemed made of stone, with a haughtily protruding lower lip and eyes as piteous as the eyes of a sick child or of a dog that has lost its master; it was as though something in that face tried to open itself and could not. And immediately he turned away again, looking down sullenly. "I am not one of you, I am not, I have never been and never will be one of you." Kahovsky's words of the evening before came into Golitsin's mind, and all at once he felt unendurably sorry for him.

"And here is Ryleyushka! Tired, you poor dear?" Golitsin went up to Ryleyev and kissed him with par-

ticular tenderness. He felt that he had wronged him : thought that Ryleyev would sleep too late, while he had spent the morning dashing about the barracks and sentry-rooms, trying to collect the troops, but did not collect any and came back empty-handed.

" There are few of us, Golitsin, dreadfully few ! "

" Never mind, we had to begin all the same," Golitsin reminded him of his own words.

" Yes, we had ! We have been free, if for one moment only ! " cried Ryleyev.

" But where is Trubetskoy ? " The thought suddenly struck him.

" The devil only knows ! There is no trace of him, he might have sunk through the ground."

" He is frightened and is probably hiding."

" What are we to do then ? We cannot get on without a dictator ! He'll ruin us ! " Ryleyev did not finish, but with a wave of his hand went off again to dash about the town looking for Trubetskoy.

" They left no directions, but have simply driven us to the Square like sheep and hid themselves," muttered Kahovsky.

And they all became subdued as though they had suddenly come back to their senses ; a chill of fear ran through all the hearts.

They did not know what to do ; they stood and waited. They had assembled in the Square about eleven o'clock. Twelve, then one o'clock, struck on the Admiralty tower, and yet there was no enemy in sight, not even police, as though all those in authority had died out.

They thought of seizing the senators, but it appeared they had already taken the oath of allegiance by eight o'clock and had gone to a special service at the Winter Palace.

The soldiers were cold in their uniforms and to warm themselves they drank hot mead posset, stamped first with one foot and then with another, rubbed their hands together. They were standing so quietly that passers-by thought it was a parade.

Golitsin walked about along the front listening to the soldiers' talk.

"Constantine is coming from Warsaw."

"He is only four stations beyond Narva, with the First Army and the Polish Corps, and he will make a clean sweep of those who swear allegiance to Nicolas."

"Other regiments, too, are sure to refuse!"

"And if he does not come here we will go and fetch him, even if we have to carry him."

"Hurrah, Constantine!" This shout ended all the conversations.

And when people asked them why they did not swear allegiance, they answered "for conscience' sake."

Between the right flank of the troops and the fence round St. Isaac's thronged a crowd. There were in it peasants, artisans, merchants, house serfs, government clerks and people rigged out so queerly that one could not tell to what class they belonged; one man had his face blacked with soot like a chimney-sweep.

"He has too many chums among the police, so he blacked his face not to be recognized," somebody explained to Golitsin.

Some were armed with rusty old swords, knives, axes, spades or even simply with sticks. And those who came empty-handed were pulling to pieces the stacks of logs by St. Isaac's fence and breaking bits out of the pavement, arming themselves with chunks of wood or stones.

"And seeing such barbarous tyranny, misrule and heavy oppression of the poor people in Russia, the Tsar

Constantine Pavlovitch has made up his mind to abolish it and to free the masses from the noble gentry," held forth an artisan with a tired, bitter and intelligent face.

"They haven't long to lord over us—to-morrow, if not to-day, their blood will be running in streams!"

"Freedom, brothers, freedom!" somebody shouted, and the whole crowd, like one man, took off their caps and made the sign of the cross.

"They are coming, they are coming!" Golitsin heard, and turning round saw some Horse Guards who appeared from behind the fence of St. Isaac's, in the direction of the Admiralty Boulevard. Mounted soldiers in brass helmets and breastplates were riding in threes, slowly and carefully, as though trying to steal up unobserved.

"They crawl along like sleepy flies. They don't care for the job, it seems, poor dears," people laughed in the crowd.

And the soldiers in the rebel ranks crossed themselves as they loaded their muskets.

"Thank God, it's beginning at last."

III

THE Governor-General, Count Miloradovitch, galloped up to the pickets of the rebels.

"Stop! Turn back!" the soldiers shouted at him, and the steel semicircle of bayonets pointed straight at him.

"A Russian Bayard, a fellow-soldier of Suvarov, am I likely to be afraid of these silly fellows—I who have been through thirty battles without a scratch?" thought Miloradovitch.

" Stop your fooling, lads ! Let me pass ! " he shouted and drove his horse right on to the bayonets.

" Where are you going, count ? They will kill you ! " cried Obolensky, running up to him.

" Oh no, they won't ! They are not villains or cut-throats, but poor misguided fools. One ought to have pity on them and bring them to reason," answered Miloradovitch, thrusting forward sentimentally his soft cushiony lips.

From the sullen angry faces of the soldiers Obolensky saw that a moment more and they would bayonet " the old braggart."

" Halt ! Ground arms," he shouted, and seized Miloradovitch's horse by the bridle. " Please ride away, your excellency, and leave the soldiers alone."

The horse shook its head, shied, drew back. The sharp edge of the leather bridle was cutting Obolensky's fingers, but, unconscious of the pain, he held on to it.

But Miloradovitch was past seeing or hearing anything. He spurred his horse, and it dashed forward. Obolensky nearly fell down, and let go the bridle. The cordon made way and the rider galloped right up to the rebel front.

" Lads ! " he began with the self-confident ease of an old " father-commander " a speech which he had evidently prepared beforehand. " This sword here, do you see, with the inscription ' To my friend Miloradovitch,' was given to me by his Imperial Highness the Tsarevitch Constantine Pavlovitch in token of his friendship. Am I likely to betray my friend and to deceive you, friends ? "

Awkwardly edging through the ranks, Kahovsky came up and stopped within two or three paces from Miloradovitch.

" Aren't there among you any old soldiers of Suvarov's ? Is there no one here except mere boys and rascally civilians ? " Miloradovitch went on, glancing at Kahovsky.

And Kahovsky, as though listening attentively, was looking straight into his face with a fixed unwavering gaze. This gaze made Obolensky suddenly feel frightened. Hardly conscious of what he was doing, he seized a musket from a soldier next to him and began to prick with the bayonet the flank of Miloradovitch's horse.

Kahovsky turned round, and Obolensky fancied that there was a hardly perceptible smile on his face.

The horse reared. Miloradovitch heard a familiar sound as though a cork were drawn out of a champagne bottle. " There it is," he thought, but had no time to add, " Good Lord, the bullet for me has not been cast yet."

In the white cloud of smoke there floated past him a white skirt of a ballet dancer : two pink legs stuck out from under the skirt like two stamens from the corolla of a flower upside down. His cushiony lips were protruded in a senile, childish way ; just as in the last act of the ballet, when he used to shout, " Bravo, Teleshova, bravo," clapping his hands. Katenka waved him a last kiss—and the black curtain fell.

He suddenly threw up his arms and began to wriggle about like a toy clown worked by a string. The hat fell off his head, baring the thin strands of dyed hair and a red trickle dripped down the blue silk of the ribbon of St. Andrew.

Obolensky felt the sharp steel of the bayonet plunge into something soft and living, wanted to pull it out, but could not—it was fast. And when the cloud of smoke dispersed he saw that as Miloradovitch fell off

his horse he had caught on the bayonet and the point had stuck in his back between the ribs.

With a terrible effort Obolensky succeeded at last in wrenching the bayonet out.

" How disgusting," he thought, as he had done once before, in his duel with Svinyin, and his face was contorted with pain.

The rebel troops fired a volley and a joyful " Hurrah, Constantine ! " rolled over the Square. They were glad because they felt that only now they had begun in earnest : they had stepped over blood.

Kahovsky edged back to his place as awkwardly as before. His face was calm and seemed thoughtful. At the sound of shouting and firing he raised his head in surprise, but immediately hung it down again as though sinking into still deeper thought.

" Yes, this one will not stop at anything. If the Tsar rides up it will go ill with him," thought Golitsin.

IV

WEARING the uniform of the Izmailovsky regiment and the blue ribbon of St. Andrew, as he had done at the thanksgiving service, the Tsar sat mounted on a white horse with a suite of generals and aides-de-camp around him and a battalion of the Preobrazhensky Life Guards drawn up into a column behind him in the Admiralty Square facing the Nevsky.

The winter day seemed stiller than ever because there was no traffic in the squares and streets occupied by the troops. The voices near were heard as clearly as indoors, and from the distance, from the direction of the Senate, came a continuous never-ending roar, like the roar of the incoming tide, with distinct shouts that sounded like

the grinding of the stones submerged and carried away by the receding waves: "Hurra-ra-rah!" All at once there was the rattle of rifle fire, the roar of the voices grew louder and seemed to draw nearer and again there came "Hurrah-ra-rah!"

General Komarovsky from time to time stole furtive glances at the Tsar. Under a black three-cornered hat pushed low over the eyebrows Nicolas's face looked pale with a transparent bluish pallor, and his dark sunken eyes seemed to have grown larger. "Fear has big eyes," involuntarily flashed through Komarovsky's mind.

"Do you hear this shouting and shooting?" said the Tsar, turning to him. "I will show them that I am not a coward!"

"Every one admires your Majesty's courage, but you must take care of your precious life for the sake of the fatherland," answered Komarovsky.

And Nicolas felt that he ought not to have spoken of cowardice. He was constantly taking a false note like a singer who has lost his voice or an actor who has forgotten his part.

"*Chevalier sans peur et sans reproche*"—this was the part he had to play. He had begun well. But when he heard shouts of "Mutiny," his heart fell, there was a darkness before his eyes, and everything began spinning and flitting by him as in a whirlwind. He rushed to the palace guard-room without himself knowing why; he must have thought that the mutineers might break into the palace any moment and wanted to set guard on the doors. Then he dashed out of the main palace gates and ran into Colonel Hvoshchinsky, who came straight from the barracks of the Moscovsky regiment, wounded and with his head bound up. Seeing blood on the

bandage, Nicolas waved his hands and shouted : " Take him away ! Take him away ! Hide him, I tell you "— so as not to incite the crowd by the sight of blood, though there was as yet no crowd at all.

Then he found himself without any of his attendants in the Palace Square among a group of passers-by who gathered round him. He was saying something to them, arguing, reading and interpreting the manifesto and begging them " Put on your caps, put on your caps— you will catch cold ! " And they shouted " Hurrah," knelt down, got hold of the skirts of his coat, his hands, his feet : " Our own Tsar, our father ! We will tear them all to pieces, we won't give you away ! " A red-faced ruffian in a fox-fur coat shoved himself forward to kiss him ; his breath smelt of vodka and onion and of something disgusting, like the smell of raw beef. A drunken man was making an uproar at the back; they tried to stop him by blows and persuasion, but he managed all the same to give a shout of " Hurrah, Constantine ! "

The Tsar felt somewhat relieved and cheered only when he saw a battalion of the Preobrazhensky Life Guards draw up in a column in front of the palace.

The suite assembled at last ; his horse was brought.

" Men ! The Moscovskys are playing the fool. Don't ape them, and do your work like the good fellows you are ! Are you ready to go with me where I tell you ? " he shouted as he rode along the front, and his voice had now the usual authoritative ring in it.

" Glad to do our best, your Imperial Majesty ! " the soldiers answered discordantly and uncertainly—but thank God that they said the words at all.

" Division, forward ! Half left turn, quick march ! " commanded the Tsar, and led them to the Admiralty Square.

But when he got as far as the Nevsky he stopped, not knowing what to do. He decided to wait for General Suhozanet, the chief of the Guards Artillery, who had been sent to reconnoitre.

All this flashed before him like a vision of delirium when he closed his eyes and lost consciousness of his surroundings for a moment : those moments of forgetfulness came upon him like a swoon.

He was roused by the voice of General aide-de-camp Levashov, who galloped up to him after the shouts and shooting in the Senate Square.

" Your Majesty, General Miloradovitch is wounded."

" Is he alive ? "

" It is a dangerous wound—he is not likely to live."

" Well, he has himself to thank for it—he has brought it on himself," said the Tsar, shrugging his shoulders, and his thin lips were twisted in a smile which made every one feel uneasy.

" No, there is nothing of Alexander in this one ! A fine sort of self-government he'll give you, just you wait a bit ! " thought Komarovsky.

" Well, how is it going, Ivan Onufritch ? " asked the Tsar, when General Suhozanet galloped up to him.

" *Cela va mal, sire*," the latter began. " Mutiny is spreading ; the mutineers will not listen to reason ; the troops that have taken the oath of allegiance are not to be trusted and may at any moment go over to the rebels —and then the worst possible horrors are sure to follow. Please send for the artillery, your Majesty."

" But you say yourself it is not to be trusted ? "

" Well, there is nothing for it, there are no other means. We cannot do without artillery."

But Nicolas was not listening. He was conscious that cold shivers were running down his back, and that

his lower jaw was twitching. "It's the cold," he thought reassuringly, but he knew it was not only the cold.

When he recovered himself he found that it was no longer General Suhozanet speaking to him, but General Voinov, the chief of the Guards Corps.

"Your Majesty, there is unrest and hesitation in the Izmailovsky regiment."

"What are you saying? How dare you?" Nicolas shouted at him so suddenly and furiously that the general was dumbfounded, and stared at the Tsar in amazement. "Your place is not here, sir, but where the troops entrusted to you have failed in obedience!"

"May I state that. . . ."

"Silence!"

"Your Majesty . . ."

"Silence!"

And every time that Voinov opened his mouth the furious shout stopped him.

Nicolas knew that there was nothing to be angry with him for, but he could not restrain himself. It was as though a fiery potion ran through his veins, warming and invigorating him. There were no more contemptible shivers or twitching jaws. Once more he was "*chevalier sans peur et sans reproche*," an autocrat and not a usurper. He understood that if he could only get angry enough he would be saved.

V

"CLIMB up, you can see better from here," called Obolensky to Golitsin, and helped him to climb up the heap of granite blocks piled together at the foot of Peter the Great's monument for the building of St. Isaac's Cathedral.

Golitsin glanced over the Square. The whole space from the Senate to the Admiralty, from the Cathedral to the Embankment and further, right along the Neva, was swarming with thousands of people—everywhere there were heads, small, black, pressed together like the grains of caviare. People were hanging on the trees of the boulevard, on lantern posts, on the gutterings, they crowded on the roofs of houses, on the portico of the Senate, on the galleries of the Admiralty tower ; it was like a huge amphitheatre, with rows of spectators one above the other.

The troops that had sworn allegiance to Nicolas encircled the mutineers, who were drawn up in a square formation. The troops kept moving and following them, the crowd moved also ; and in all this movement round and round, to and fro, the steel quadrangle of bayonets was like an immovable axis of a turning wheel.

In the middle of the Square were the members of the Secret Society, officers and civilians—" men of vile appearance in swallow-tail coats " as the police reported afterwards ; there stood the regimental banner of frayed and faded silk of greenish gold, worn and torn by bullets on the fields of Borodino, Kulm and Leipzig—now the holy standard of Russian liberty ; a little table, brought from the Senate guard-room, bespattered with ink, with some papers on it—perhaps the unfinished manifesto—a loaf of bread and bottle of wine—the holy meal of Russian liberty.

The pale phantom of the sun appeared for a moment in the pale sky, and the steel bristle of thin broken needles on the grey block of granite at the foot of the Bronze Horseman sparkled with a pale radiance.

Returning to the ranks, Golitsin learnt that the Horse Guards were getting ready for attack, that Ryleyev had

disappeared, Trubetskoy had not come, and no word of command had been given.

"We must choose another dictator," said some.

"But there is nobody to choose. No one of low rank and with an obscure name will venture," others replied.

"Obolensky, you are the eldest, save the situation!"

"No, gentlemen, spare me. Anything you like, but this I will not take upon myself."

"What is to be done, then? Look, they are going into attack already!"

Two squadrons of the Horse Guards came at a trot from behind the wooden fence of St. Isaac's, and drew up into a column.

Collegiate assessor Ivan Ivanovitch Pushchin, wearing a long overcoat and a tall black hat, was walking up and down in front of the Square, smoking his pipe as calmly as though he were in his own study.

"Will you obey my command, lads?" he asked the soldiers.

"We will, your honour!"

Freeing his right arm from the coat sleeve, he raised his hand in a green kid glove, as though waving an invisible sword, and shouted:

"Halt! Ground arms! Form up against the cavalry!"

One volley could fetch down all the cavalry. In order to spare them and to avoid embittering them, Pushchin ordered to shoot at the horses' feet or over the riders' heads.

The cavalry were galloping up to them with a heavy thud. The muskets cracked, but the bullets whistled over the men's heads.

When the smoke of the shots had dispersed it became evident that the first attack had failed. It had failed

because of the lack of space—the protruding corner of the fence, which they had to ride round, was in the way—and, most of all, the slippery ground. The unshod horses slipped with all four feet on the frozen pavement, and fell. And the men went into the attack faintheartedly : they knew that one cannot make a cavalry attack at a distance of twenty paces when the musket fire would go right into the horses' heads.

" What do you come rushing in for, you anathemas ? " swore the mutineers, as they helped the riders to get up from the ground.

" One may well rush if one is driven. And thank you very much, friends, for shooting past us, or we thought we would never come out of this alive," said the Horse Guards gratefully.

" Come over to us, lads."

" Just wait till it gets dark, then we will all go over."

" Retreat, form up ! " shouted General Orlov, commander of the regiment, and he began forming the squads for a second attack.

But the second was no better than the first. The bayonets were lowered just as uniformly, and stumbling against their steel points as before, the horses fell, bringing down their riders with them. And from behind the fence the crowd threw stones, bricks, logs.

One attack after another, like wave after wave, broke against the immovable invincible square, and with every new impact it seemed to become firmer and more stone-like. It rested against Peter's rock, and, like it, it was impregnable.

All of a sudden there came from a distance, with the merry thunder of military music, shouts of " Hurrah, Constantine ! " and three and a half companies of Marine

Guards, under the command of Lieutenant Mihail Kühelbeker and Captain Nikolay Bestuzhev, ran out from the Galerny Street.

The rebels embraced and kissed the new-comers.

"Mates, comrades, the dear fellows! So you've stuck to us after all! Bless you!"

"The army and the fleet are together now!"

"Our side wins both on land and on sea!"

"Thank God, all Russia is on the go now!"

The Marines formed up in another square, to the right of the Moscovsky regiment, on the bridge of the Admiralty Canal and facing St. Isaac's.

And then from the other side, from the Palace Square, came another "Hurrah, Constantine!"

Grenadier Guards were running along the Boulevard in separate groups, with their overcoats unbuttoned, their bags full of ammunition, balancing their muskets in their hands.

They had already got as far as the Square, climbed over the stones heaped at the corner of the Admiralty Boulevard and the Embankment when something happened.

The commander of the regiment, Stürler, ran all the time alongside the soldiers, persuading and imploring them to return to the barracks.

"Don't give way, men, don't listen to the rascal!" shouted the regimental aide-de-camp, Lieutenant Panov, a member of the Secret Society, who was also running with the soldiers.

"Which one are you for?" asked Kahovsky, running up to Stürler pistol in hand.

"For Nicolas!" answered the latter.

Kahovsky shot. Stürler clutched at his side and ran on. Two soldiers with bayonets ran after him.

"Strike the damned German, strike him!" The bayonets struck him through the back—he fell.

The Grenadier Guards joined the Moscovsky regiment. And again there were embraces and brotherly kisses.

The third square formed up on the left of the first, facing the Embankment and backing on St. Isaac's.

Now there were about three thousand troops and tens of thousands of people ready to do anything at a mere sign from the chief. But there was no chief yet.

The weather changed. An icy east wind began to blow. The frost grew stronger. The soldiers without their overcoats shivered, changed from one foot to the other, and clapped their hands.

"What are we standing for?" they wondered. "We seem to have frozen to the place. Our hands and feet are numb with cold, and still we stand."

"Please, your honour, will you lead us to the attack?" non-commissioned officer Lyubimov said to Captain Mihail Bestuzhev.

"What attack? Against whom?"

"Against the troops, or the palace, or the fortress—wherever you please."

"We must bide our time, my man, and wait for orders."

"Ech, your honour, if we wait we shall be done for!"

"If there is one thing we can do well it's to stand and wait!" said Kahovsky, with a jeer. "Our revolution does nothing but stand and wait!"

"A revolution that stands and waits," Golitsin repeated to himself with prophetic horror.

VI

WHEN, after the cavalry attacks had failed, the authorities realized that nothing was to be attained by violence and decided to try persuasion, the Grand Duke Mihail Pavlovitch asked the Tsar's permission to speak to the mutineers. Nicolas refused at first, and then consented with a gesture of dejection :

" Do what you like ! "

The Grand Duke rode up to the mutineers' front.

" Good day, lads ! " he shouted gaily and resoundingly as though on parade.

" We wish you good day, your Imperial Highness," the soldiers answered as gaily.

Mihail Pavlovitch, *le bourru bienfaisant,* had a fierce appearance but a soft heart. He was ready to forgive the mutineers for this cheerful greeting.

" What's the matter with you, men ? What are you up to ? " he began in his usual homely way. " Tsarevitch Constantine Pavlovitch has abdicated, I was witness to it myself. You know how fond I am of my brother. In his name I command you to swear allegiance to the lawful . . ."

" It isn't lawful to swear allegiance to two men," answered a hubbub of voices.

" Steady ! " the Grand Duke commanded, but they listened to him no longer.

" We aren't doing any harm, but we won't take the oath to Nicolas ! "

" Where is Constantine ? "

" Bring Constantine ! "

" Let him come himself, then we'll believe ! "

" Don't be obstinate, men, it will be the worse for you," one of the generals attempted to interfere.

"To the devil's mother with you! You generals don't mind taking a fresh oath every day, traitors that you are, but to us it's no light matter," they shouted at him so angrily that Mihail Pavlovitch understood at last what was happening—he turned slightly pale. And his horse, too, seemed to understand—it started and drew back.

In the narrow space between the two squares—the Moscovskys and the Marines—Wilhelm Karlovitch Kühelbeker, absurdly flurried, rushed from side to side, holding a large pistol in his hands.

"*Voulez-vous faire descendre Michel?*" said some familiar but curiously changed voice near him.

"*Je le veux bien, mais où est-il donc?*"

"Do you see the black plume there?"

Screwing up his short-sighted prominent blue eyes that were as sad and tender as when he used to talk with his schoolfellow Pushkin "of Schiller and of glory and of love," he began to take aim.

All of a sudden he felt that some one was touching his elbow. He turned round and saw two soldiers. They said nothing, one merely gave a wink and the other shook his head. But he understood: "Don't do it! Let him alone!"

Kühelbeker raised the pistol right up to his nose and examined it as though in surprise.

"I believe it did get wet after all," he muttered, shame-facedly.

A large old-fashioned coach, with eight glass panes, high springs and gilded box, stopped at the end of the Admiralty Boulevard near the mutineers. Two old men with frightened faces, dressed in ecclesiastical vestments, got out of the coach: they were Seraphim, Metropolitan of Petersburg, and Yevgeny of Kief.

Some general had got hold of them in the palace church where they were just going to begin a service on the occasion of Nicolas's accession, put them into the coach with two deacons and brought them to the Square.

The old men stood in the crowd in front of the mutineers' pickets, and helplessly whispered together, not knowing what to do.

"Don't go, they'll kill you," shouted some.

"Go in God's name! That's a job in your own spiritual line. They are not infidels, you know, but good Christian people," others tried to persuade them.

Metropolitan Yevgeny had a part of his vestment torn by people who tried to keep him back, and he got lost in the crowd. Left alone, Seraphim was so overwhelmed that he was not even conscious of fear; he was petrified, he could not understand what was happening to him—it was just as if he were falling headlong into an abyss. He kept crossing himself and whispering prayers as he gazed from side to side, rapidly blinking with his weak eyes.

He suddenly saw before him the calm, good-natured and astonished face of the young lieutenant of the Marines, Mihail Karlovitch Kühelbeker, who was as clumsy, long-legged and goggle-eyed as his brother Wilhelm.

"What is it you wish, Father?" Kühelbeker asked him politely, raising his hand to the salute. A Russian German and a Lutheran, he did not know how one should address a Metropolitan, and decided that since he was a priest it must be "Father."

Seraphim made no answer, but began to blink and whisper and cross himself more rapidly than ever. He was shaking all over and his little beard was shaking too. Kühelbeker felt sorry for the old man.

"What is it you wish, Father?" he repeated more politely still.

"I should like to reach the soldiers. . . . To speak to them," Seraphim faltered at last, timidly pointing to the rebel ranks with his plump little hand.

"I don't know, I am sure . . ." Kühelbeker shrugged his shoulders in perplexity. "No one is allowed through. Though wait a little, Father, I shan't be a minute."

He ran off. Seraphim timidly raised his eyes and looked at the soldiers' faces. He thought they would be wild beasts, not men. But he saw ordinary human faces, not in the least terrifying.

He recovered a little and suddenly with the courage which sometimes takes possession of cowards, took off his mitre, gave it to the deacon, put the cross on his head and moved forward. The soldiers made way for him, lowered their rifles as for prayer and crossed themselves.

He took a few steps more and found himself before the very front of the mutineers. Here, too, men were making the sign of the cross, but as they did so, they shouted:

"Hurrah, Constantine!"

"Orthodox warriors!" Seraphim began, and every one was silent and listened. He spoke so inaudibly that only disconnected words reached them. "Warriors, be pacified. I entreat you . . . Swear allegiance . . . Constantine Pavlovitch abdicated three times over . . . God is my witness . . ."

"You'd better leave God alone, your Eminence," said a voice so firm and low that every one turned round. It was Prince Valeryan Mihailovitch Golitsin speaking.

"And what are you? Who are you? Where do you come from? Do you believe in Christ our Lord?"

faltered Seraphim, and suddenly he turned pale and began to shake, this time with anger and not with fear.

"Yes, I do," Golitsin answered in the same firm and low voice.

Seraphim held out the cross to him.

"Now, then, you kiss it, if you believe."

"Not in your hands," said Golitsin, and wanted to take the cross from him.

Seraphim pulled it away, possessed by a new mystic terror, as though he had only now seen that which he feared—the face of the devil himself in the face of a rebel.

"Well, give it to me, don't be afraid, I'll give it back to you. It is yours as yet, though soon we'll take it from you," Golitsin brought out and his eyes gleamed so menacingly from under the spectacles that Seraphim gave him the cross and again began to blink, to whisper and to cross himself.

Golitsin took the cross and kissed it reverently.

"Let me kiss it too," said Kahovsky.

"And me! And me!" asked the others. The cross was passed to every one in turn, and when it came to Golitsin again he gave it back to Seraphim, saying:

"You can go now, your Eminence, and remember that it was not of your own will you made the sign of the cross over Russian liberty!"

And again, as at the beginning of the rising, he shouted with frantic enthusiasm:

"Hurrah, Constantine!"

"Hurrah, Constantine!" The solders caught it up.

"Go to your own place, Father, stick to your church!"

"Nice sort of Metropolitan you are, if you've taken two oaths!"

"Fraud, traitor, deserter!"

Bayonets and swords were crossed over Seraphim's head. The deacons ran up, seized him by the arms and led him away.

"And here are the cannons," somebody said, pointing to the artillery that were coming up.

"That's all as it should be," laughed Golitsin. "After the cross—the cannon, after God—the Beast!"

VII

"I AM not yet sure of the artillery," Nicolas answered every time that he was besought to send for it.

He was uncertain not of the artillery alone but of other troops too. The Semyonovsky regiment sent word through the crowd to the mutineers that they wished to join them; the Izmailovsky made no answer to the Tsar's greeting, repeated three times; the Finnish stopped at St. Isaac's bridge, and would not stir from there.

"What if they all go over to the mutineers?" thought Nicolas. "The artillery will not be of much use then: the cannons will be turned against me."

"*Bonjour*, Karl Fyodorovitch. Look what is happening here. That's a nice beginning of a reign—a throne besmirched with blood!" he said with a wry smile, as though he had toothache, to General Toll, who rode up to him.

"Sire, there is only one way to put an end to this: shoot down this rabble with cannon," Toll answered.

The Tsar frowned in silence; he felt that he ought to say something but did not know what. He had forgotten his part again and was afraid of taking a false note.

" We don't want bloodshed," Benckendorf prompted him.

" Bloodshed, yes," remembered Nicolas. " We don't want bloodshed. Can you wish me on the first day of my reign to shed my subjects' blood ? " He stopped, pouting like a child. He again felt sorry for himself, and wanted to cry with pity : " *Pauvre diable !* Poor fellow ! Poor Nick ! "

Taking Benckendorf by the arm, Toll rode aside with him and glancing towards the Tsar, asked in a whisper :

" What's the matter with him ? "

" Why ? " Benckendorf pretended not to understand and looked at Toll's simple, soldierly face with the sly smile of a courtier.

" Does he really mean to spare these rascals ? " Toll asked in surprise.

" Well, it's not for you or me to judge. The Tsar's mercy is unbounded. He thinks of having recourse to artillery in the last extremity only. Our plan is to surround and press them, compelling them to surrender without bloodshed."

Toll made no answer. A fighting general, fellow-soldier of Suvarov, Kutuzov's favourite, familiar with Napoleon's tactics, he knew that Benckendorf spoke with the ignorant lightness of men who had never smelt powder ; that the mutinous square stood firm ; it could be shot, crushed, wiped out, but it could not be moved ; and that if the mob joined in the mutiny, then in the crush, among thousands of people, there would be a general mêlée, not a battle, and heaven only knew how it might end. The troops that had remained loyal were wavering and those in command were behaving as people always do before losing a battle : every one lost his head,

fussed and bustled about senselessly, gave and accepted ridiculous advice : to wait for the night, in the hope that the rebels would disperse of themselves by nightfall ; or to send for a fire brigade and pour water over the rebels, " directing the stream against the eyes ; as there was a frost, this would render the soldiers incapable of action."

The artillery appeared at last : after much persuasion the Tsar had agreed to send for it. Four gun-carriages with empty fronts and no shells came at a rapid trot from Gorohovy Street, under the command of Colonel Nesterovsky.

" Have you any shells with you, colonel ? " asked Toll.

" No, your Excellency, I have not been told to bring any."

" Please send for some immediately, for they will soon be required," Toll commanded.

He knew what he was doing : by giving this unauthorized order on his own responsibility he was saving the Tsar and perhaps the Russian Empire.

For many long hours which seemed an eternity, Nicolas had been slowly riding up and down as far as the corner of the St. Isaac's fence which shielded him from the rebels' front and back again to the corner of the Nevsky.

Bullets whistled from behind the corner as they flew above people's heads : the rebels, no doubt on purpose, aimed too high.

The corner of the fence protected him from the bullets, but still it seemed to him that they whistled right over his head.

" What are you saying ? " he asked General Benckendorf, who, riding out beyond the corner was giving some

orders to the battalion of the Preobrazhensky that stood facing the rebels.

"I say that the fools must not bow to the bullets, your Majesty," Benckendorf answered, and before he had time to turn away he saw that the Tsar ducked.

Two spots of colour appeared on Nicolas's pale cheeks. He spurred his horse and it carried him beyond the corner. He saw the rebels and they saw him. They shouted "Hurrah, Constantine!" and fired a volley. But evidently they aimed too high again, sparing him. The bullets whistled over him like whips which merely threatened without striking—and there was mockery in this whistling: "Captain Romanov, can it be that you are afraid?"

He spurred the horse again, it reared and would have carried the rider right up to the rebel front, had not general aide-de-camp Vassilchikov seized it by the bridle.

"Please ride away, your Majesty!"

"Let me go!" the Tsar shouted furiously. But Vassilchikov held fast and would not have let go if it had cost him his life: he was a faithful slave.

Suddenly Nicolas's fingers that held the bridle grew weak, and dropped it. Vassilchikov turned the horse round and it galloped back.

The Tsar was hardly conscious of what he was doing. He recovered when he got as far as the Palace Square. He had to explain to himself and to others why he left the place of danger so suddenly. He called up Bashutsky, the palace commandant, and asked if the order to reinforce the palace guard by two companies of sappers had been carried out.

"Yes, your Majesty."

"Are the carriages ready?" he asked Adlerberg, his aide-de-camp.

"Yes, your Majesty."

He had ordered them to prepare the country carriages so as, in the last extremity, to take both the Empresses and the Tsarevitch to Tsarskoe Selo under a convoy of the Cavalier Guards.

"And how is the Empress?" asked the Tsar.

"Her Majesty is very anxious, and implores your Majesty to go with them," Adlerberg answered.

Nicolas understood: to go with them meant to fly.

"And what do you think?" he asked, glancing at Adlerberg from under his eyebrows.

"I think that your Imperial Majesty's life . . ."

"Fool!" shouted the Tsar, and turning his horse round, galloped to the Senate Square again.

It struck three at the Admiralty tower. Dusk was coming on. It was snowing. White flies were circling in the darkening air.

Along the Admiralty Boulevard stood a company of artillery with four guns and boxes of ammunition.

General Suhozanet galloped up to the Tsar.

"Your Majesty, it is getting dusk, and in the circumstances darkness is dangerous. Please give orders to clear the place with cannon fire."

Nicolas made no answer, and returned to his old place, by St. Isaac's fence.

There had been two crowds before: one siding with the Tsar and another with the rebels; now the two had become one. It was growing darker and darker, and in the darkness the people pushed forward, pressing against the Tsar's horse.

"The crowd is getting unruly. Please ride away, your Majesty!" said some one of the suite.

"Will you please, all of you, go home, good people! The Tsar asks you to," Benckendorf was persuading them.

"They will shoot at me and may hit you," said Nicolas.

"See how soft-hearted he has become!" said voices in the crowd.

"Now that you are in a tight corner you wag your tails, but you'll put on the screw when you have a chance."

"We won't go, we'll die with them."

The faces suddenly became angry, and those who had stood bareheaded began to put their caps on.

"Caps off!" the Tsar shouted and again, as that morning, the delight of fury spread like fire through his veins; again he understood that if only he could get thoroughly angry he would be saved.

Suddenly from behind the fence they began throwing stones, bricks, logs.

"What if they kill me like a dog, with a stone or a stick on the head?" thought Nicolas in disgust, and suddenly remembered the red-faced ruffian who wanted to kiss him that morning and whose breath smelt of raw beef. He felt faint and sick. There was a darkness before his eyes. His arms and legs seemed made of cotton-wool. He was afraid he would fall from his horse.

"Hurrah, Constantine!" they shouted; there was a crackle of muskets and the flash of shots in the darkness. The Tsar's horse shied and darted aside.

"Your Majesty, not a minute is to be lost, we must have shrapnel, there's nothing for it," said Toll.

The Tsar wanted to answer him, and could not—his tongue would not obey him.

VIII

"A REVOLUTION that stands and waits." Golitsin recalled Kahovsky's words.

They stood doing nothing. They still shivered without their overcoats, and to warm themselves changed from one foot to another, struck hand against hand. They waited, without knowing what it was they waited for.

They waited so for four hours without making a single movement, until all the regiments were collected together to crush them. They seemed to be bound by a spell of immobility.

Their opponents were standing still, too. The whole fight seemed to have come to this : which could stand the longest.

" Can it be that Kahovsky is right ? " thought Golitsin.

The victory was being put into their hands, and they would not take it, missing one opportunity after another, making blunder after blunder, as though on purpose.

When the Moscovsky regiment mutinied, it ought to have gone to other regiments and got them to join in ; instead, they went to the Senate Square, thinking that all the others were there already.

When the Marines set out, they could have taken the artillery with them : cannons against cannons would have decided the issue of the rising ; they could have taken it, but they did not.

The Life Guards could have occupied the fortress which commanded the palace and the town ; they could have seized the palace where there were at the moment members of the Senate, of the State Council, the two Empresses and the Tsarevitch ;—they could have done it, but they did not.

And yet, even after all these blunders, the rebel forces were enormous : three thousand soldiers and ten times as many people ready for anything, at a sign from the leader.

" Give us arms, and we shall turn the whole town upside down for you in half-an-hour ! " men said in the crowd.

" There will be shooting. It's no use your staying here to be killed," said the soldiers, trying to drive away the crowd.

" Let them shoot ! We'll die with you ! " the people answered. The soldiers, the people, the junior members of the Society, were all ready to act, but the senior members were not : their one wish was to suffer, to die, but not to act.

" Do you know the game of giving in ? " Kahovsky asked Golitsin.

" What game ? " said Golitsin in surprise.

" It's a game of draughts : the one who has lost most, wins."

" What do you mean ? "

" I mean that we are playing at giving in. We give in to each other, they to us and we to them. We vie with each other in stupidity,—to see which can blunder most."

" No, it's not stupidity."

" What is it then ? "

" I don't know. Perhaps we are fighting not them only, perhaps there is in ourselves too . . . No, I don't know, I can't say it. . . ."

" You can't ? Ech, Golitsin, you are at it too ! . . . But perhaps you are right—it's not stupidity, but something else. Did you see they caught a spy this morning—aide-de-camp Bibikov ? They crushed him, tore the

clothes off his back, half-killed him ; and Mihail Kühelbeker stood up for him, led him out of the crowd, politely saw him past the pickets, and actually took off his own overcoat and wrapped the man in it—so that the poor darling shouldn't catch cold ! We are practising Christian virtue : they strike us on the left cheek, we turn the right. We are demented, and we have infected the men too ; there, they are shooting into the air, sparing the enemy. A humane revolution, a philanthropic mutiny ! We are saving our souls. We are afraid of blood, we want no bloodshed. But blood will be shed—only it will be shed in vain, and it will be our fault ! They will shoot us like fools, and it will serve us right ! Slaves, slaves for ever ! There will never be a revolution in Russia ! "

He stopped suddenly, turned away, caught hold with both his hands of the iron bars of the fence—they were by Peter's monument—and began beating his head against them.

" Come, come, Kahovsky ! Our case is not lost yet, success is possible. . . ."

" Possible ? That's just what is so vile, that success is, is possible ! But we must not lose a moment or it will be too late ! For God's sake, Golitsin, help ! Tell them. . . . What are they doing, what are they doing ! Yes, and you, too, are one of them ! You are all together, and I am . . ."

His lips quivered, his face worked, like the face of a small child who is going to cry. He sank on to the stone step of the fencing, bent down, leaned his elbows on his knees and clasped his head, crying out with a stifled sob :

" Alone ! Alone ! Alone ! "

And Golitsin understood, as he gazed at him, that if

there was among them a man ready to ruin his soul for the common cause—it was he, Kahovsky, and he understood, too, that no words could help or comfort him. He bent down in silence, embraced and kissed him.

"Gentlemen, come quick! Obolensky has been chosen dictator; a council of war is just going to meet," Pushchin announced as calmly as though they were at Ryleyev's tea-table and not in the street.

Obolensky was made dictator almost against his will. Chief aide-de-camp of the Foot Guards, one of the three members of the Supreme Council of the Secret Society, he had more right than anyone to be dictator. But while no one wanted to assume authority, he wanted it least of all. He resisted for a long time, but realizing that a final refusal might ruin the whole thing, he agreed at last and decided to call a "council of war."

The council took a long time to assemble. Men went and stopped on the way, as though lost in thought, still under the same spell of immobility.

"Why are we standing, Obolensky? What are we waiting for?" asked Golitsin, coming up to the table in the middle of the square, under the banner.

"But what are we to do?" Obolensky answered, dully and reluctantly as though thinking of something else.

"What to do? Why, to attack."

"No, Golitsin, you may say what you like, but I am not going to attack. We shall spoil the whole thing: we shall compel the friendly regiments to act against us. All they ask for is that we should wait till night. 'Stick out till night,' they say, 'and we will all go over to you, one by one.' And we have not enough troops either—the forces are too unequal."

"And the people? All the people are on our side, we have only to give them arms."

"God forbid! If we give them arms we shall regret it: there will be free fighting, massacres, plunder; innocent blood will be shed."

"We must do our utmost to avoid bloodshed, and to employ the most lawful means," some one recalled the words of Trubetskoy, the dictator.

"And what if they shoot us before evening?" said Golitsin.

"They won't shoot; they haven't got any ammunition here," Obolensky answered, as dully and reluctantly.

"It won't take long to bring up ammunition."

"Any way, they won't dare to; they won't have the heart."

"But what if they have?"

Obolensky made no answer, and Golitsin realized that it was no use talking.

"Look, look!" shouted Mihail Bestuzhev, "they have brought up a battery!"

The battalion of the Preobrazhensky regiment which stood in front of the others, parted on either side: three guns were brought into the empty space, taken off the carriages and placed pointing right at the mutineers.

Bestuzhev jumped on to the table to see better.

"And here is the ammunition! They are just going to load them!" he shouted again and jumped off the table brandishing his sword. "Now is the time to attack and to seize the guns!"

The guns stood less than a hundred paces away, guarded by a squad of Cavalier Guards under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Annenkov, member of the Secret Society. All that was needed was to run and seize them.

Every one turned to Obolensky, waiting for the word of command. But he stood as before, silent and motion-

less, with his eyes on the ground, as though seeing and hearing nothing.

Golitsin seized him by the arm.

"Obolensky, what are you about?"

"What's the matter?"

"Why, don't you see? The cannons are before your nose, they will shoot in a moment."

"They won't, I tell you, they won't dare to."

Golitsin got angry.

"You madman! You madman! What are you doing!"

"Calm yourself, Golitsin. I know what I am doing. Let them begin, and we will come in afterwards, that's how it ought to be."

"Why ought it? Speak up! What are you driving at, damnation take you!" cried Golitsin in a rage.

"Look here, Golitsin," said Obolensky, still without raising his eyes. "We are just going to die together. So don't be angry, my dear fellow, if I don't know how to say it. I don't myself know why, only it must be so, it can't be otherwise if we are with Him. . . ."

"With whom?"

"Have you forgotten *Him*?" Obolensky looked up with a gentle smile, and Golitsin lowered his eyes.

A sudden pain pierced his heart like a sharp knife. All his life his one thought had been that at such a moment as the present he might be with Him; and now the moment had come and he had forgotten Him.

"Never mind, Golitsin, it will all come right, it will all come right," said Obolensky. "Christ be with you! Christ be with us all! Perhaps we are not with Him, but He certainly is with us! And about the attack," he added after a silence: "when we make a bayonet charge presently you may be sure we won't funk

it and we shall yet see which side will win ! . . . Well, and now it's time to go to the front : after all, I am a dictator, you know ! " he laughed gaily and ran off brandishing his sword. Every one followed him.

When they got to the front they saw General Suhozanet approaching them at a gallop from the direction of the battery. When he got to the pickets he shouted something, pointing to the place where the Tsar was, and they let him through.

" Men ! " said Suhozanet, riding up to the very front of the Moscovsky regiment. " The guns are before you. But the Tsar is merciful, he is sorry for you, and if you put down your arms at once . . ."

" Suhozanet, what about the constitution ? " they shouted to him from the Square.

" I have been sent to bring you mercy and not to negotiate. . . ."

" Then go to the devil ! "

" And send some one better ! "

" Strike him, lads, bayonet him ! "

" Let the rascal alone, he isn't worth a bullet."

" I tell you for the last time : put down your arms or we will shoot ! "

" Shoot away ! " every one shouted with an unseemly oath.

Suhozanet spurred his horse, turned it, whipped it up to a gallop—the crowd drew back—he dashed away. They fired a volley at him, but he was already on his way back to the battery, and only some white feathers flew down from his cockade.

And Golitsin saw with delight that Obolensky fired also.

Suddenly on the left flank of the battery appeared a rider on a white horse—the Tsar. He galloped up to

Suhozanet, bent down to him and whispered something in his ear.

Everything became hushed, and they could hear Suhozanet give the command :

" Battery, load the cannons ! "

" Hurrah, Constantine ! " the rebels shouted frantically. In the whitish twilight, red little stars of the smoking fuses glowed by the side of the copper mouths of the cannons. Golitsin was looking right into them—right into the eyes of death, and the old words sounded to him like new :

" God is with us ! God is with us ! No, Kahovsky is wrong ; there will be a revolution in Russia, and such a one as the world has never seen ! "

IX

" IF they don't put down their arms at once, I'll give orders to fire on them," said Nicolas when he sent Suhozanet to the mutineers.

" Well, what news ? " he asked, when Suhozanet returned.

" Your Majesty, those lunatics are clamouring for a constitution ! They ought to have some grape shot."

Suhozanet was waiting for orders. But Nicolas said nothing and seemed to have forgotten him.

" Are the guns loaded ? " he asked at last, speaking slowly and with difficulty.

" Yes, your Majesty, but with blank shot. Shall I have them loaded with live shell ? "

" Very well. You may go," said the Tsar, speaking as slowly and laboriously. " Wait a minute "—he stopped him suddenly. " First shot into the air."

" Yes, your Majesty."

Suhozanet rode off to the guns, and the Tsar saw that they were being loaded with live shot.

His former fear was gone, and a new, mysterious one took its place. He no longer feared for himself—he realized that they would do nothing to him, would spare him to the end—but he was afraid of what he himself would do.

Seeing Benckendorf, he rode up to him. "What shall I do, what shall I do, Benckendorf?" he whispered into his ear.

"Why, open fire at once, your Majesty! They will go into attack in a minute, and take the guns from us."

"I cannot! I cannot! Don't you understand that I cannot!"

"Your sensitive heart does your Majesty credit, but this is not the moment for it! You must make up your mind to do one or the other: shed the blood of some in order to save all, or to sacrifice the Empire. . . ."

Nicolas listened, without taking it in.

"I cannot! I cannot! I cannot!" he kept whispering as though in delirium. And there was something so new, so strange in this whisper that Benckendorf was alarmed.

"Calm yourself, for God's sake, calm yourself, your Majesty! Only give the word of command, and I take everything upon myself."

"All right, you can go now. In a minute . . ." Nicolas waved his hand and rode aside.

He closed his eyes for a moment and he saw so clearly as if it were actually before his eyes Sasha's naked little body. It happened one hot sultry night some five years ago in Sasha's blue nursery at Peterhof. The boy was cutting his teeth; he did not sleep at night, cried, tossed about in a fever, but that night he slept

soundly. Alexandrine led her husband to Sasha's cot and gently parted the curtain. The boy was asleep with his arms and legs stretched out ; he had kicked off the bedclothes, and was lying naked, his rosy little body dimpled all over, and he smiled in his sleep. " *Regarde, regarde le donc ! Oh, qu'il est joli, le petit ange !* " Alexandrine whispered with a smile. And Captain Romanov smiled too.

" What is it ? Raving ? Am I going mad ? " He came to himself. He opened his eyes and saw General Suhozanet, who was saying to him for the third time :

" The guns are loaded, your Majesty ! "

The Tsar nodded in silence, and Suhozanet again receiving no orders rode off to the battery in perplexity.

" Save me, O Lord ! help me ! " Nicolas tried to pray, but could not.

" Fire in succession, beginning with the right flank ! First," he shouted suddenly, with the same sort of feeling with which a timid murderer raises the knife, not in order to strike but only to try.

" Begin ! First ! First ! First ! " the orders passed from one commander to another.

" First ! " repeated the youngest—battery-commander Bakunin.

" Stop ! " shouted the Tsar. He could not strike—the knife dropped out of his hand.

And in a few seconds again :

" Begin ! First ! "

And again :

" Stop ! "

And for the third time :

" Begin ! First ! "

It was as if a gigantic pendulum swung from madness to terror, from terror to madness.

Suddenly he remembered that the first shot would be into the air, over the heads. Had not he better try for the last time—perhaps they would be frightened and scatter ?

" First ! First ! " the order rang again.

" First ! Fire ! " shouted Bakunin.

But the gunner hesitated.

" Why don't you obey orders, you son of a bitch ? " cried Bakunin, darting up to him.

" Your honour, it's our own people," the man answered in a low voice and looked at the Tsar. Their eyes met and the distance between them seemed to disappear : it was not a slave looking at the Tsar, but one human being at another.

" Yes, our own ! It is Sasha's, Sasha's body ! "

Nicolas wanted to shout " Stop ! " but some terrible hand seized him by the throat.

Bakunin seized the fuse from the gunner's hand and himself put it on the tube with powder.

There was a deafening roar and thunder. But the shot flew above the crowd, over their heads. The knife did not go into the body—it glided past.

The mass of the rebels did not stir ; leaning against Peter's rock it stood as immovable and invincible as the rock itself. But in answer to the guns there was a rattle of musket fire and a triumphant shout :

" Hurrah ! Hurrah ! Hurrah, Constantine ! "

And as water turns into steam from the touch of white-hot iron, so the terror of the Tsar turned to fury.

" Second, fire ! " he shouted—and the second cannon thundered.

A cloud of smoke covered the crowd, but from the heart-rending wails, shouts, screams and some other terrible sounds that seemed like wet smacks and splashes,

he understood that the shot had fallen right into the crowd. The knife had gone into the body.

And when the crowd scattered he saw that the rebels were still standing ; only a little group had separated from them and was impetuously rushing into attack.

But the third, fourth, fifth guns went off and through the clouds of smoke pierced by the fire of the shots one could see cannon-balls pouring like hailstones into the compact mass of human bodies.

Peter's rock was in the way, but they shot at it too : it seemed that they were shooting the Bronze Horseman.

And when the whole of the Senate Square was empty they brought the guns forward, and pursuing those who were trying to escape, went on firing along the Galerny, the Isaakievsky, the English Embankment, the Neva, and even the Vassilyevsky Island.

" Re-load ! Fire ! . . . Load—fire ! " Suhozanet shouted in a voice that had grown hoarse.

" Load—fire ! Load—fire ! " the Tsar seconded him. Blow after blow, one shot after another—the knife went in deeper and deeper and still he was not satisfied. It was as though he were quenching an insatiable thirst—and the fiery draught had never before spread through his veins so delectably.

General Komarovsky looked at the Tsar, and thought as unexpectedly as he had done before : " A devil, not a man ! "

X

GOLITSIN was standing by the iron fence of the monument, facing the battery, when the first shot was fired ; the shell flew screeching over their heads and struck against the walls, the windows and the roof of

the Senate. The broken panes fell down with a crash. Two men who had clambered into the cups of the scales which the Goddess of Justice on the Senate portico held in her hand, fell to the foot of the statue ; several people killed on the roof toppled over and dropped against the pavement with a dull thud, like sacks of flour.

But the crowd in the Square stood firm.

" Hurrah, Constantine ! " they shouted with triumphant defiance.

" Follow me, men ! Form up into column for attack ! " Obolensky commanded, brandishing his sword.

" Can it be that he is right ? " thought Golitsin, " that they won't dare to shoot, that they won't have the heart to ? Have we conquered, have we stood out longest ? We shall make a bayonet charge and get the cannons ! "

But the second shot rang out and the first row of the soldiers fell as though they had been mown down. The back rows still held together. But the crowd was already scattering, running away in all directions like ants when the ant-heap is trodden on. Some rushed into the Galerny Street ; others to the Embankment and jumping over the railing of the Neva, fell into the snow ; others ran to the Horse Guards' Riding School. But they began to shoot from there too, from the battery of the Grand Duke Mihail Pavlovitch.

People waved their caps and handkerchiefs as they ran, but still they were shot at from both sides. Men rushed about, trampled upon each other. The bodies of the killed fell in rows and piled up in heaps. Not knowing where to run, the crowd turned round and round, as in a whirlpool, struggling frantically. And cutting into it with metallic shriek and clang the cannon-balls tore and quartered the bodies so that blood-stained

pieces of flesh, heads, arms and legs flew up into the air. Everything was mixed up in a wildly yelling, roaring and howling chaos.

Golitsin stood without moving. When the Moscovsky wavered and turned tail, he saw the banner of the regiment moving in the distance as it was being carried away—the disgraced banner of Russian freedom.

"Stop!" Obolensky shouted; but no one listened to him.

"Where are you off to?" said Mihail Bestuzhev, swearing violently, as he seized one of the running soldiers by the collar.

"It's no use kicking against the pricks, your honour," answered the man, wrenched himself free, and ran on.

Bullets whistled past Golitsin's ears, tore off his hat, made holes in his coat. He closed his eyes and waited for death.

"Well, I believe it's all over," he heard Pushchin's calm voice.

"Not, not all," thought Golitsin, "there is something still to be done. But what is it?"

There was a momentary stillness between two shots, and he heard a faint crack right up by his ear. He opened his eyes and saw Kahovsky, who had climbed on to the stone foundation of the fence and, clinging with one hand to the railings, was holding a pistol and pulling back the hammer with the other.

Golitsin turned round to see at whom he was aiming. There, on the left flank of the battery, behind the clouds of smoke, sat a rider on a white horse. Golitsin recognized Nicolas.

Kahovsky shot and missed. He jumped off the fence, pulled out another pistol from the breast of his coat, and ran.

Golitsin ran after him. As he ran he, too, pulled out a pistol and drew back the trigger. Now he knew what he had to do : to kill the Beast.

But they had not run ten paces before the crowd, rushing in the opposite direction, closed in upon them and drew them back, pushing and squeezing them.

Golitsin stumbled, fell, and some one fell on the top of him ; some one kicked him on the temple so violently that he lost consciousness.

When he came to, the crowd had scattered, Kahovsky had disappeared. The firing had ceased. They were bringing the guns forward so as to shoot down Galerny Street and the Embankment.

He made his way across the deserted Square, between the bodies of the killed. He was himself like one dead among the dead. All was still—no movement, no groans—only the warm blood flowed on the ground, thawing the snow and then itself freezing.

He remembered that the Moscovsky regiment ran into Galerny Street and he went there, to his comrades, so as to die together.

When he entered Galerny, firing began again—and here in the narrow space between the houses it was still more murderous. Flying through the long narrow street the cannon-balls pursued people and mowed them down. People ran into houses, hid behind every corner, every projection, they knocked at the gates, but everything was securely locked and did not open in answer to any entreaties. And the bullets struck the walls, fell, bounced and did not spare a single corner.

Some one by Golitsin's side had his head smashed. " It makes the same noise as a wet towel thrown against the wall," he thought with callous surprise.

And he closed his eyes again. An anguish worse than death came upon him. "I'll kill myself," he thought, took out the pistol, drew back the trigger and put it to his temple. But he remembered Márinka, and took his hand away.

At this time Mihail Bestuzhev, collecting the remnant of the soldiers on the Neva, was forming them into a column to go across the ice to attack the fortress. He thought that if they took it and turned the guns on to the Winter Palace, the rising might begin afresh.

Three squadrons had already formed up when a shell whizzed by and struck against the ice. The battery on the Isaakievsky Bridge was firing along the Neva. Shot after shot mowed the soldiers down. But they continued forming.

Suddenly there was a shout :

"We are drowning."

The ice, broken by the cannon-balls, gave way. Drowning men struggled in the water. Others rushed to the bank.

"This way!" shouted Bestuzhev, pointing to the gates of the Academy of Arts.

But before they had time to run in, the gates were closed. They loosened a beam from the bottom of a broken barge and began smashing the gate. It was already creaking under their blows when the soldiers saw a squadron of the Cavalier Guards coming straight towards them at a gallop.

"Save yourselves as best you can, men!" cried Bestuzhev, and they all scattered. The standard-bearer alone remained. Bestuzhev embraced and kissed him, told him to give the banner to the lieutenant who rode at the head of the squadron, and ran.

He turned round as he was running and saw that the

standard-bearer went up to the officer, gave him the banner and fell under a blow from the sword, while the officer galloped away with the banner.

XI

"YOUR Majesty, it is all over," Benckendorf announced.

The Tsar looked down and said nothing. "What was it? What was it?" As though coming to himself from delirium, he tried to remember, and he felt that something terrible and irremediable had happened.

"It is all over, the mutiny has been put down, your Majesty," Benckendorf repeated, and there was something so new in his voice that Nicolas was surprised, but still failed to understand or to believe it.

He raised his eyes timidly and immediately looked down again; then he raised them more boldly and suddenly he understood: there was nothing terrible, everything was as it should be, he had crushed a rebellion, and put the rebels to death. It was only now that he had really begun to reign: he was an autocrat, not an impostor.

Two spots of colour appeared on his pale cheeks; his lips which he had bitten till they bled became red as though filled with blood. His whole face revived.

"Yes, Benckendorf, it is over. I am Emperor, but at what a price, good God!" he sighed and raised his eyes to heaven. "God's will be done!"

He took up his part again and knew that he would not go wrong any more; the mask stuck to his face, and this time it would not fall off.

"Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah, Nicolas!" sounded in the Senate Square, and when thousands of voices

carried it to the inner rooms of the Winter Palace, they understood there, too, that the rebellion was put down.

The young Empress Alexandra Feodorovna was sitting on the window-sill in the little round lantern-like study, overlooking the Palace Square. Silent and pale as death, she was looking out of a window from which she could see a part of the Square covered with troops.

The Empress Marie Feodorovna chattered and fussed about as usual. She shoved into everybody's hands a little portrait of the late Emperor Alexander Pavlovitch, entreating them to take it to the rebels :

" Show them, show them this angel—perhaps they will come to reason ! "

When the cannons thundered, Marie Feodorovna clasped her hands :

" Good heavens, what have we come to ! My son ascends the throne to the sound of cannons ! Blood is being shed, Russian blood ! "

" Bad blood, your Majesty," Alexander Nikolaevitch Golitsin comforted her. But she repeated disconsolately :

" What will Europe say ! What will Europe say ! "

And the young Empress at the first sound of the cannons, fell on her knees, buried her face in her hands, and remained so, perfectly still and motionless ; only her head quivered incessantly.

And afterwards, when everything was over, her head never ceased to quiver—like the head of a flower on a broken stem. She herself was unconscious of it, but every one else noticed it. They thought it would pass, but it did not—it remained so all her life.

A round-faced, blue-eyed little boy in a red gold-embroidered coat, that looked something like a hussar's uniform,—the Tsarevitch Alexander Nikolaevitch—was

sitting at a round table in the next room, eating his supper, watched by his English governess, Mimi.

He was the first to hear the " Hurrah " in the Square ; he ran up to the window and shouted, clapping his hands :

" Papa ! Papa ! "

When the Tsar entered the State apartments of the Palace that sparkled with the fiery clusters of the candelabra, the golden humming beehive became still.

" One wouldn't recognize him—quite a different man : such a change in his face, in his walk, in his voice," every one observed at once.

" *Tout de suite il à pris de l'applomb*," thought Prince Alexander Nikolaevitch Golitsin. " He has come back a different man : he left—an impostor, he returned—a Tsar."

" Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord ! " Metropolitan Seraphim solemnly greeted the Tsar in the church.

" Grant to the most Christian Tsar and Emperor of all Russia, Nicolas Pavlovitch, in health and wealth long to live ! " boomed the thunder-like voice of the deacon at the end of the service.

" Yes, by the grace of God, Emperor and Autocrat of all Russia ! What God has given me, no man shall take from me," thought Nicolas, and became finally convinced that everything was as it should be.

XII

" WE are afraid of blood, we don't want bloodshed. But blood there will be, only it will be shed in vain ! " Golitsin kept repeating Kahovsky's words. " In vain ! In vain ! In vain ! " thumped in his sick head with the monotonous weariness of delirium.

Late at night when everything was over, a sergeant of the Moscovsky regiment, running away from the mounted patrols, stumbled in the dark upon Golitsin, who had fallen asleep among stacks of logs and was stiff and half-frozen. He told Wilhelm Karlovitch Kühelbeker, who was near by with a group of soldiers making their escape.

Golitsin was brought to consciousness, and Kühelbeker took him to Odoevsky's, whose house he shared. There he put him to bed, tucked him in, tied round his head a towel soaked in vinegar, gave him tea, punch, and some decoction of his own making.

Golitsin dropped instantly into a deep sleep. When he woke up, Kühelbeker was no longer in the room. He called—no one answered. He felt very weak and giddy ; his temple ached dreadfully, probably from the kick with the boot during the mêlée in the street. But still he dressed, went into the street, called a sledge and told the driver to go to the Senate Square. He decided to go first there and then home.

It was not daylight yet, but the sky was beginning to turn grey, and the snow on the roofs showed white.

The nearer they got to the Senate Square the more the streets reminded one of a military camp : everywhere there were troops, patrols, cordons, heaps of straw and hay, pikes and rifles on the stands, calls of sentries, cracking of bonfires ; the glistening mouths of the cannons appeared and disappeared in the smoke and flicker of the flames.

A cart covered with sacking drove along the Embankment. The crowd made way for it ; people began to take off their caps and cross themselves.

" What is it ? " asked Golitsin.

" The dead ! " some one answered him in a frightened

whisper. "God rest their souls! They are Christian people, you know, and yet they chuck them under the ice like dogs."

Other people near Golitsin began whispering also, and as he listened he learned that the police had been picking up the dead bodies all night and taking them to the river. A lot of holes had been made in the ice there, and both the dead and those who had been wounded and were still living were thrown into the water: there was no time to sort them out—the order was to clear the Square by morning. They hastily shoved the bodies through the holes as best they could; some stuck fast and froze to the ice.

In the whitish twilight of the morning black flocks of crows, scenting prey, whirled over the Neva with sinister cawing. And this cawing blended with another and a still more sinister sound, like scraping of iron.

"And what is this? Do you hear?" Golitsin asked again.

"That's the washing and rolling," they answered in the same timid whisper.

"What washing and rolling?"

"Go and look for yourself."

Golitsin pushed his way a little further, stood on tiptoe and peeped in the direction from which the mysterious sounds came. There in the Square men were scraping the pavement with iron scrapers, clearing off the red blood-stained snow, sprinkling the ground with the clean and white snow, and rolling it with rollers; on the Senate steps they were washing the frozen pools of blood with boiling water out of wooden tubs and rubbing them with brushes and loofas. They were putting panes into the broken windows, stuccoing, painting, white-washing the yellow walls and white columns of the

Senate bespattered with blood and studded with bullets. And up on the roof they were mending the scales in the hands of the Goddess of Justice.

And the grey, quiet, foggy morning seemed again undecided which way to turn—to thaw or to frost ; again the Admiralty thrust its spire into the low sky like a pin into cotton-wool ; the bridges across the Neva led to a white wall, and again it seemed that there, beyond the river, there was nothing but white mist, emptiness, the end of heaven and earth, the edge of the beyond. And, as before, the Bronze Horseman on his steed of bronze was galloping into this white outer darkness.

And the scrapers scraped and scraped with a rasping metallic clank.

" They won't scrape it off," thought Golitsin. " The blood will rise out of the earth and will call to God and conquer the Beast ! "

Book Two

After the Fourteenth

Part Three

I

'REVOLUTION is on the threshold of Russia, but I swear it will not find a way into it so long as I am Emperor by the grace of God. . . . Why do you look at me like that?"

Benckendorf was opening his eyes wide, thinking of one thing only—how to keep awake. But it was not easy to catch him unawares, even when he was sleepy.

"I admire you, sire. Your Majesty has been rightly compared to Apollo Belvedere. He conquered Python, the terrible snake, and you—the world revolution."

The conversation was taking place in a reception room in the Winter Palace on the night of December 14th.

The Tsar had spent eight hours in the Square; he was tired, cold and hungry. When he came back to the palace, he took a hasty supper after the thanksgiving service, and at once began to cross-examine those who had been arrested. Wearing the uniform of the Preobrazhensky regiment, scarf, ribbon, wellington boots and white trousers, tightly laced, with every hook and button fastened, he did not lie down once, and only dozed occasionally as he sat on a leather sofa with an uncomfortable protruding back, at a table covered with papers.

"Yes, we got off happily," said the Tsar, feeling that his heart was still sinking, like the heart of a man who has just run across a narrow plank over a precipice, and he stole a glance at Benckendorf with the secret hope that he might comfort him. But as though on

purpose, Benckendorf frightened him, entangled him in a sticky cobweb of fear as a spider entangles a fly.

"It all hung on a hair's-breadth, your Majesty. Had the rebels acted decisively they would certainly have succeeded. But evidently God in His mercy had plunged them into strange indecision. They stood in the Square for hours doing nothing, while we took all the necessary measures! Had the sappers been one minute late when the Life Grenadiers were already in the yard—the palace and the whole Imperial family would have been in the villains' hands! It is terrible to think what this infernal band of miscreants who have renounced their God, their Tsar and their country would have done! Terrible! One's hair stands on end, one's blood freezes in one's veins!"

"Would they have killed us all?"

"All, your Majesty."

"And is it true that they wanted to kill me there, in the Square?"

"Yes, they did. Perhaps the very bullet that pierced Miloradovitch was intended for your Majesty."

"And is he still alive?"

"He is dying, I don't think he'll last till morning. St. Anthony's fire in the bowels."

They were silent for a time.

"And is all quiet now?" asked Nicolas, and thought that he was asking the question too often.

"Thank God it is, so far."

"Have there been many arrests?"

"Some seven hundred soldiers, about a dozen officers and some rascally civilians. But these are not the chief ones, they are only the vanguard."

"Isn't Trubetskoy the chief one?"

" No, sire, I believe we must look higher . . ."

" Higher ? What do you mean ? "

" I do not yet know for certain, but I fear that the most important officials, perhaps even members of the State Council, are mixed up in this affair."

" Which ? "

" I would rather not mention names."

" Yes, yes—you must ! "

" Mordvinov, Speransky . . ."

" Impossible ! " whispered the Tsar, and again he felt his heart sinking, this time with terror of the future, not of the past : he had just crossed one precipice and now a new one was gaping in front of him ; he thought all was over—but it was only the beginning.

" Yes, your Majesty, it may all begin again." Benckendorf guessed his thought as though he had overheard it.

" Speransky, Mordvinov ! Impossible ! " repeated the Tsar ; like a fly in a cobweb he was still trying to free himself from the sticky meshes. " No, Benckendorf, you are mistaken ! "

" God grant that I may be mistaken, sire." The great detective was looking at Nicolas in silence with the same gaze that sees through stone walls as then, on the eve of the Fourteenth, and a hardly perceptible smile glided over his thin lips. He suddenly felt cheerful, and was no longer sleepy. He understood that the thing was done : the fly would not free itself from the cobweb. There had been Arakcheyev, now there would be Benckendorf.

He took out of his pocket and put on the table a folded paper covered with small handwriting.

" Please read this. Very entertaining."

" What is it ? "

"The plan of the constitution drawn up by Trubetskoy, their dictator."

"Is he arrested?"

"Not yet. He has been hiding at his brother-in-law's, the Austrian Ambassador's. I expect they will be bringing him directly. . . . By the way, about the constitution . . ." Benckendorf smiled as though he had suddenly remembered something funny, or perhaps he had pity on the Tsar and wanted to humour him. "When this drunken *canaille* shouted in the Square, 'Hurrah, Constitution!' somebody asked them: 'But do you know what Constitution is, you fools?' 'Of course we know,' they said. 'Constantine is the husband and Constitution is the wife.'"

"That's rather good," said Nicolas, smiling his usual wry smile that suggested toothache, but his lips were still pouting like a boy's who has been punished.

There was a noise behind the door. The arrested men were brought under convoy into the room next to the Tsar's study, and there they were questioned by Generals aides-de-camp Toll and Levashov.

Benckendorf went to the door and half opened it. "What a crowd of them, the Pugachovs!" he said with a grimace of disgust.

The palace commandant, Bashutsky, whispered something into his ear.

"Who is it?" asked the Tsar.

"Another rascally civilian, Ryleyev, an author. Would your Majesty like to cross-examine him?"

"No, not now. You do it first. Well, you can go now. Tell me when Trubetskoy is brought."

When Benckendorf went out, Nicolas leaned his head on the back of the sofa, shut his eyes and dozed.

Adlerberg came carrying high in the air a tray with a

coffee-pot which he balanced on three fingers with the skill of a flunkey. The Tsar had been drinking black coffee all night to keep himself awake.

Nicolas started and roused himself.

"You had better lie down, your Majesty."

"No, Fyodoritch, it's not a time for sleep."

"This is the second night you have been sitting up. You will be ill if you go on like this."

"Well, if I am ill, I shall have to go to bed. But so long as my legs will carry me, I must keep up."

He poured out some coffee, drank it, and to rouse himself more thoroughly, began writing a letter to his brother Constantine. He could not think of him without grinding his teeth, but he wrote with the usual brotherly affectionateness.

General Toll came in with some papers.

"Sit down and read, Karl Fyodorovitch."

Toll read out the depositions of Obolensky, who had been arrested together with Ryleyev.

"What do you think, can we forgive the soldiers and these unhappy young men?" asked the Tsar.

It was not the first time he had asked the question. Toll made no answer.

"Ah, poor, unhappy creatures!" Nicolas heaved a deep sigh. "Maybe they are excellent men. What is there to put them to death for? We shall all answer for them to God. Their error is the common error of our age. We ought to save and not to destroy them. Am I a hangman or a bloodthirsty tyrant? No, I cannot, I cannot, Toll! Don't you see that it breaks my heart?"

"He will burst into tears," Toll thought with disgust, not knowing where to look. He listened with an expression of patient boredom on his face—rough, harsh and flat, but open and honest—the face of an old

Prussian sergeant. The Tsar went on for a long time, babbling in the sentimental way he inherited from his mother. He was trying on the mask in front of Toll as in front of a looking-glass.

"Well, what do you think, my friend, can I forgive them, eh?"

Toll could endure it no longer. He cleared his throat and turned on his chair so violently that the chair creaked.

"Your Majesty, you will always have time to forgive them, but until the chief instigators of this crime have been discovered, not only the officers, but the soldiers, too, should be treated with the full rigour of the law. . . . Which cell is it your pleasure to give to Obolensky?"

The Tsar paused, pouted, frowned; he saw that Toll was not willing to be a looking-glass. He sighed still more heavily, leaned his head on his hand, took a pencil and the plan of the Petropavlovsky fortress with rows of cells, each bearing a special number—marked one of them with a red cross, wrote down the number in a note to General Sukin, the commandant of the fortress, and gave it in silence to Toll. Toll took it also without a word, bowed and went out.

And the Tsar again leaned against the hard back of the sofa and dozed; again his head began to slide off from the smooth back to the hard handle.

General Bashutsky, the palace commandant, came in. In one hand he was carrying a sword, and in another a silver saucer with something small and round on it.

Nicolas started, came to himself and looked at him in surprise.

"What is it?"

"Count Miloradovitch, your Majesty . . ." Bashutsky began and broke off with a sob.

"Dead?"

"Yes, sire."

"The Kingdom of Heaven be his." Nicolas crossed himself, and thought that he ought to feel something.

"His last words were: 'I am dying as I have lived, with a clear conscience; I am happy that I have given my life for the Tsar.' He ordered that his serfs should be set free. And to your Majesty he sent this—his sword and the bullet that pierced him. . . ."

Bashutsky put on the table the sword and the saucer with the bullet.

"I cannot . . . forgive me, your Majesty," he sobbed again, kissed the Tsar's shoulder, turned away, buried his face in a handkerchief and ran out.

Nicolas picked up the bullet carefully with two fingers and gazed at it for a long time with curiosity. It was a new, small, pistol bullet, not such as soldiers use—it must have been shot by one of those rascally civilians. "It was meant for your Majesty," he remembered Benckendorf's words.

He put the bullet aside and took the slip of paper belonging to Trubetskoy which Benckendorf had brought. He read:

"The experience of all nations and of all times has proved that autocratic power is equally ruinous for the ruler and the community; that it is not consistent either with the precepts of our holy religion or with the principles of common sense. It is not right to admit as the basis of government the arbitrary will of one individual; it is impossible to agree that all the rights are on one side and all the duties on the other.' . . ."

"*Quelle infamie*," thought the Tsar. "Yes, it's infamous, but not stupid."

He wanted to despise, and he could not ; he felt that this was no longer " Constitution, wife of Constantine." He had shot down the rebels in the Square, but how could he shoot *this* ? This leaflet was terrible—more terrible and more difficult to turn aside than a bullet.

" Trubetskoy, your Majesty," Benckendorf announced. The Tsar thought, and said :

" Let him in."

II

AS soon as Trubetskoy woke up on the morning of the 14th he remembered Obolensky's words of the day before : " But you are coming to the Square, aren't you ? " and, as on the day before, he felt weak and faint, seemed suddenly to become limp, fluid.

He was afraid that they would come to fetch him ; he went out of the house, took a cab and went to the office of the Army Headquarters ; from there, to a friend at whose house he had lunch. Seeing that it was almost one o'clock he grew more confident, thinking that the regiments had been sworn in and everything had passed off smoothly. He set off home to change his clothes and then go on to the service at the palace.

As he drove into the Admiralty Square he saw a crowd, heard shouts of " Hurrah, Constantine ! " stopped to ask what was the matter, heard it was mutiny and nearly fainted on the spot.

He hardly remembered what happened afterwards. He went back to the Army Headquarters without knowing why. In anguish, not knowing what to do, he rushed from place to place like a hunted hare. He decided to pass the night at his brother-in-law's, the Austrian Ambassador.

He was tired, went to bed early and fell sound asleep. He dreamt of something incredibly lovely and suddenly felt such joy that he woke up. He tried to remember what it was and could not—it was too unlike anything ; he only knew for certain that it was more than a dream. He suddenly remembered his fear during the day and at once realized that it was gone and would never come back ; he was not even ashamed, and it only seemed surprising that he had not been himself, but somebody else.

There was a knock at the door :

" Your Excellency, your Excellency ! " he heard the valet's frightened voice.

" What is it ? "

" They have come from the palace."

He understood that he was arrested.

Four soldiers with naked swords brought the prisoner into the Tsar's room. Generals Levashov, Toll, Benckendorf, the palace commandant Bashutsky, and the chief of police, Shulgin, came in behind.

Nicolas got up, approached Trubetskoy, stopped and looked at him for a long time in silence : a slightly pock-marked man with reddish hair, scanty and dishevelled whiskers, prominent ears, a large hooked nose and thick lips with lines of suffering at the corners of his mouth.

" So that's what he is like, their dictator ! He looks like a Jew in a fright, he is shaking all over ! " the Tsar thought with an insatiable thirst for contempt.

He went nearer and pointed with the index finger of his right hand at Trubetskoy's forehead.

" What was in this head when with your name, your family, you went in for such a thing ? Colonel of the

Guards, Prince Trubetskoy, aren't you ashamed to be with this rabble ? "

He seemed to himself at that moment an Apollo Belvedere striking down the Python. But one mask fell, another one was put on : the terrible was replaced by the sentimental one, the one he had just been trying on before Toll.

" Such a charming wife ! Have you any children ? "

" No, your Majesty."

" You are lucky to have no children. Your lot will be dreadful, dreadful ! "

In spite of his apparent anger, he was calm ; it had all been thought out beforehand.

" Why are you trembling ? "

" I am cold, your Majesty. I was driven here with nothing but my uniform on."

" Why was that ? "

" I had my fur coat stolen."

" Who stole it ? "

" I don't know. I suppose it happened in the rush when I was arrested ; there were so many people," Trubetskoy answered with a smile and raised his eyes : there was no fear at all in those large grey eyes, simple, kind and sad. He stood stooping awkwardly, with his hands behind his back.

" Stand properly ! Put your arms down ! "

" *Sire* . . ."

" When your Tsar speaks to you in Russian you must not dare to answer in another language ! "

" I am sorry, your Majesty, my hands are tied . . ."

" Untie him ! "

Shulgin came up and began to untie the rope. Nicolas turned away, and seeing a paper in Toll's hands, said :

" Read it ! "

Toll read the deposition of one of the arrested men—he did not mention his name—that the affair of the Fourteenth was the work of a Secret Society which, in addition to Petersburg members, had a large branch in the 4th Corps, and that Prince Trubetskoy, the staff-officer on duty, might give full information.

Trubetskoy listened and rejoiced : he understood that the man had put them on a false track in order to conceal the Southern Society.

" Is that Pushchin's ? " asked Nicolas.

" Pushchin's, your Majesty," answered Toll.

Trubetskoy noticed that they exchanged a wink.

" Well, what do you say to this ? " The Tsar turned to him again.

" Pushchin is wrong, your Majesty," answered Trubetskoy, straining all the powers of his intellect to understand what the wink could have meant.

" A-ah, you think it's Pushchin's ? " Toll jumped at him.

But Trubetskoy was not disconcerted—he understood what the matter was : they were trying to catch Pushchin through him.

" Your Excellency yourself said that it was Pushchin's."

" And where does Pushchin live ? "

" I don't know."

" Not at his father's ? "

" I don't know."

" I have always said that the 4th Corps is the nest of the conspirators," said Toll.

" Your Excellency has been grossly misinformed. There is no Secret Society in the 4th Corps, I answer for that." Trubetskoy looked at him with almost unconcealed triumph.

Toll dropped the subject, feeling like a sportsman

does when the game escapes from under his nose. The Tsar frowned ; he, too, understood that they had made a false move.

" But what about yourself ? Speak of your own case. Did you belong to the Secret Society ? "

" Yes, your Majesty," Trubetskoy answered calmly ; he knew that he would not go wrong now.

" Were you dictator ? "

" Yes, I was."

" What a man ! I don't suppose he knows how to command a squad and he wants to rule the destinies of nations ! Then why were you not at the Square ? "

" Seeing that they required nothing but my name, I withdrew from them. I hoped, however, up to the last moment that remaining in contact with them in the guise as it were of a chief I should succeed in dissuading them from this absurd plan."

" What plan ? Regicide ? " Toll again jumped at him gleefully.

" No one thought of regicide," Trubetskoy was going to answer, but thought that this would not be true and said :

" Regicide did not form part of the political intentions of the Society. I wanted to dissuade them from raising a mutiny in the troops, from unnecessary bloodshed."

" Did you know about the mutiny ? " asked the Tsar.

" Yes, I did."

" And you gave no information ? "

" I would not dream of giving anyone the right to call me a scoundrel, your Majesty."

" And what will they call you now ? "

Trubetskoy made no answer, but looked at the Tsar in a way that made him uncomfortable.

" Don't you try to prevaricate, sir ! Tell all that

you know," Nicolas shouted menacingly, beginning to get angry.

"I don't know anything more."

"Don't you? And what is this?"

He went up rapidly to the table and took up a square of paper, the draft of the Constitution.

"Don't you know this either? Who wrote this? Whose handwriting is it?"

"Mine."

"And do you know that I can shoot you on the spot for this?"

"Shoot me then, sire, you have the right," said Trubetskoy, and he raised his eyes again. He remembered the words: "In God have I put my trust, I will not be afraid what man can do unto me."

"I must not get angry, I mustn't!" thought the Tsar, but it was too late: the familiar delight of fury had already spread in his veins like fire.

"A-ah, you imagine you will be shot and will become a romantic figure?" he whispered breathlessly, bringing up his face to Trubetskoy's and stepping up to him so that Trubetskoy drew back. "But no, I will not shoot you, I'll make you rot in prison! In fetters! In fetters! A yard under the ground! Your fate will be terrible, terrible, terrible!"

The more he repeated the word, the more he was conscious of his own impotence: here this man stood before him, and was afraid of nothing. He could throw him in prison, put him in chains, torture him, kill him, and yet he could do nothing to him.

"Scoundrel!" shouted Nicolas, and rushed at Trubetskoy and seized him by the collar. "You have sullied your uniform! Off with your epaulettes! There! There! There!"

He tore at him, pushed him, pressed him, shook him, and at last threw him on the floor.

"Your Majesty," Trubetskoy said quietly, kneeling before him and looking him straight in the eyes. The Tsar understood: "Aren't you ashamed?" He came to his senses, left Trubetskoy, walked away, fell into a chair and covered his face with his hands.

Every one was waiting in silence to see how it would end. Trubetskoy got up and looked at Nicolas with the same gentle smile as before. Had Nicolas seen it now, he would have understood that there was pity in that smile.

The silence lasted a long time. At last the Tsar took his hands away from his face. It was set and impenetrable.

He got up and pointed Trubetskoy to an arm-chair by the table.

"Sit down. Write to your wife," he said without looking at him.

Trubetskoy sat down, took up a pen and looked at the Tsar.

"What am I to write, your Majesty?"

"What you like."

Nicolas was looking over Trubetskoy's shoulder at what he wrote.

"My dear, be calm and pray to God."

"There is no need to write much, write merely, 'I shall be alive and well.'"

Trubetskoy wrote:

"The Tsar is standing by me, and tells me to write that I am alive and well."

"I *shall* be alive and well. Write at the top, 'I shall be.'"

Trubetskoy did so. The Tsar took the letter and gave it to Shulgin.

"Take it to the Princess Trubetskoy."

Shulgin went out. Trubetskoy got up. Again there was a silence. The Tsar was standing before him without looking at him, with his eyes cast down, as though not daring to raise them.

He sat down at the table and wrote to the commandant, Sukin :

"Put Trubetskoy in the Alexeyevsky ravelin, cell Number 7." He gave the note to Toll.

"Well, you can go," he said, raising his eyes and looking at Trubetskoy. "You must excuse me, prince. My position, too, is not an enviable one, as you can see for yourself." He smiled a wry smile and again he turned red, feeling that this had not come off. He frowned and looked sulky. "Go out, all of you !" he said with a wave of his hand.

III

'MÁRINKA !" said Golitsin, opening his eyes.

This was the first time that he regained consciousness. While he was delirious he had felt that though he did not see her, she was there by his side, and he had suffered from not being able to call her.

"What is it, Valeryan Mihailovitch darling ?" She bent down to him and looked into his eyes with joy and fear. "Well, what is it ? what ?" she asked, trying to understand what he wanted.

He wanted to ask where he was and what was the matter with him, but he was so weak that he could not speak.

"What time is it ?" he brought out at last with careful effort.

"Half-past six," answered Márinka.

"He is in a perspiration," she said, putting her hand on his forehead.

"Thank heaven!" Foma Fomitch said joyfully. Golitsin knew him from his voice. "The doctor said the other day, 'If he only gets into a perspiration he will recover.'"

She wiped the perspiration off his face. He was gazing at her as though trying to remember, as though it were all part of a prophetic dream of immemorably long ago, that had been dreamt again and again: a charming, charming girl, bathed in the fragrance of love as the lilac in the dewy freshness of morning.

"Darling, my own, my own!" he whispered, and stretched to her.

Their eyes met; she smiled. She understood what he wanted. She put to his lips the palm of her hand, warm and fresh like the cup of a flower warmed by the sun.

"He ought to have some medicine, Marya Pavlovna," said Foma Fomitch.

Márinka poured out some medicine into a spoon and gave it to Golitsin. It tasted good and smelt of almonds and aniseed.

"Some more," he asked with childish greediness.

"You mustn't have any more. Are you thirsty?"

"No, sleepy."

"Wait a minute, your head is too low."

She put one arm round his shoulders, raising his head with unexpected force and skill and with her other hand she straightened the pillows.

"Is it comfortable?" she asked, putting back his head.

"Yes, Márinka . . . máminka."

He did not know whether he had called her that

by chance or on purpose. Their eyes met again ; she smiled at him, and he repeated with tender ecstasy :

" Márinka . . . little mother. . . ."

He wanted to say something else, but dark soft waves overwhelmed him ; he was only conscious that she kissed him on the forehead, made the sign of the cross over him and whispered :

" Sleep, my own, God be with you ! "

He closed his eyes with a smile ; it seemed to him that she took him into her arms and was rocking him to sleep.

He slept till eleven.

" Good morning, prince. How have you slept ? " asked Foma Fomitch, coming out from behind the screen.

" Splendidly. But why are you so concerned ? I am much better," said Golitsin.

Márinka looked at him and was surprised and delighted ; there was such a change in his face and in his voice.

" Well, thank God, thank God ! " Foma Fomitch crossed himself, and his childish eyes, his childish smile, beamed with such kindness that Golitsin felt happier still.

" Won't you have something to eat ? Some coffee, eggs, soup ? "

" Everything, everything, Foma Fomitch. I am awfully hungry."

The old man ran out.

Golitsin lay for a long time with his eyes closed.

Márinka sat on the edge of his bed and stroked his hand in silence.

" What day of the month is it ? " he asked at last.

"The eighteenth."

"So it is three days. I was taken ill on Tuesday morning, wasn't I?"

"Yes, on Tuesday. The valet went in with your tea and found you were lying on the bed with your clothes on, feverish and unconscious."

"Was I delirious?"

"Yes."

"What did I talk about?"

"Always about the shooting. And also about the beast. That some beast ought to be killed."

"Do you remember, Márinka, I told you that we should meet again? Well, we have met. . . ."

He looked at her long and intently. He wanted to ask if she knew what had happened on the Fourteenth, but somehow he was afraid and did not ask.

"I know everything." She guessed his thought. "Grandmamma's butler was at the Senate Square. He ran to us in the evening and told us. He saw you there too. . . ."

She broke off suddenly, bent down, put her arms round him, pressed her cheek against his, hid her face in the pillow and wept.

"There, Márinka darling, my dear little girl! You see here I am with you and we shall never . . ."

He wanted to say "We shall never part," but felt that he could not deceive her: she knew it all already, not only about the past, but about the future too; that was why she was weeping over him, as the living over the dead—saying good-bye to him for ever.

"And here is your breakfast," said Foma Fomitch, coming in with a tray in his hands.

Márinka jumped up and ran away. The old man looked after her, shook his head, sighed, looked at

Golitsin and said nothing : he, too, must have felt that nothing could deceive or comfort him.

During breakfast he talked of various things to distract the invalid. He pulled out of his pocket a newspaper with the official account of the rebellion of the Fourteenth, and began reading it aloud. The rebellion was described as a little disturbance of the troops on parade.

" Foma Fomitch, please will you go to grandmamma ? " said Márinka, coming into the room.

" Why ? What is it ? "

" Nothing, she misses you, she is cross that you have forgotten her and is jealous of the prince."

" I am going, I am going ! " Foma Fomitch jumped up in a flurry and ran out, tripping along on his nimble old legs.

" Why, he still loves her as he did forty years ago," thought Golitsin.

The winter sun looked in at the windows. The transparent flowers of frost sparkled like precious stones, and an amber light filled the room.

" What a jolly room ! " thought Golitsin. " It's the sun that does it . . . no, she," he decided after a glance at Márinka.

She was tidying the room. Golitsin watched her silently ; all her movements, young, light and vigorous, were harmonious like music and it seemed as though everything she touched, however dull and drab it was, at once became gay and festive like herself.

She must have felt his glance—she turned round, smiled, went up to him, sat down on the edge of the bed and bent over him :

" Well, what is it ? "

A ray of sunlight passed between them like a tightly

drawn web and in the bluish smoky dusk bright motes moved round and round as though dancing in an endless chain.

"How good it is, Márinka, my little sun!" he whispered with a blissful smile, looking at her through the sunlight.

"What is good?" she asked with the same smile.

"Everything . . . it is good to live."

"Yes, to live, to live, only to live," he thought with such a thirst for life as he had never felt before.

IV

THE Chief Committee of Investigation into the affair of the Fourteenth opened its sittings first in the Winter Palace and then in the Petropavlovsky fortress. The Tsar himself conducted the whole business, working unceasingly for fifteen hours a day, so that the courtiers feared for his health.

"*Point de relâche!* Whatever happens, I will get to the very bottom of this whirlpool," Nicolas said to Benckendorf.

"Not too fast, not too fast, your Majesty. There's no doing anything by violence—you must do it by kindness and cunning. . . ."

"Don't teach me, I know it myself," answered the Tsar, frowning and turning red at the remembrance of Trubetskoy. But he comforted himself by the thought that that failure was due to bodily weakness, exhaustion, lack of sleep; it had happened once, but it would not happen again. He had had a rest, he was calmer, and as on that day, after the shooting in the Square, felt that everything was as it should be.

Ryleyev was questioned by the Committee on Decem-

ber 21st and the following day he was brought to the Palace, to be cross-examined by the Tsar.

"If only the end would come at once!" thought Ryleyev, but he soon realized that the end would not come at once: they would put him to a slow torture, make him drink the cup of death drop by drop.

The day after his arrest, the Tsar had sent to inquire whether Ryleyev's wife was in need of money. Natasha Mihailovna answered that she had a thousand roubles her husband had left her. Nicolas sent her two thousand roubles, as a present from himself, and on December 22nd, Ryleyev's daughter Nastenka's name-day, another thousand from the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna. And he promised to forgive Ryleyev if he confessed everything. "The Tsar's mercy has shaken my soul," she wrote to her husband.

Ryleyev was most of all surprised by the present being sent for Nastenka's name-day: so they had taken the trouble to find out her name. "How touching! He knows how to get at one, the scoundrel! And what if . . ." Ryleyev began to think and broke off: he felt frightened.

One day he thanked Sukin, the commandant, for a visit from his wife. Sukin was surprised, for he did not allow any visits; he thought perhaps she had come in without a permit. He questioned the warders, but they all said that she had not come.

"You must have dreamt it," he said to Ryleyev.

"No, I saw her as I see you now. She told me what I could not possibly have known—about the Tsar's present."

"Why, you were told about it by the Committee."

"By the Committee afterwards, but first I heard it from her."

"Perhaps you have forgotten?"

"No, I remember. I am not mad yet."

"Well, then it was a *shade*."

"What shade?"

"You know, when people see things that aren't there. You are ill. You ought to have the doctor."

"Yes, I am ill," Ryleyev thought with disgust.

On the evening of the 22nd he was brought to the palace guard-room and searched, but his hands were not bound. Then he was taken under escort into the adjutants' room. There he was told to sit in a corner behind the screen and wait.

He was trying to think of what he would say to the Tsar directly, but he was thinking of something else. He was remembering how on that night when they came to arrest him Natasha had rushed to him, enfolded him in her arms and screamed in a heart-rending voice as she screamed when she was in labour:

"I won't let you go! I won't let you go!"

And she held him tighter and tighter. Oh, stronger than all chains are these weak tender arms—the chains of love! With a terrible effort he wrenched himself free. He picked her up—there was almost no breath in her—carried her to the bed and laid her on it, and as he ran out of the room, turned round once more. She opened her eyes and looked at him: it was her last look.

"I know at any rate what they will crucify me for; but she will stand by the cross, and the sword will go through her soul and she will never know what it was for."

This was what he thought as he sat in the corner behind the screen in the adjutants' room.

And at times he thought of nothing at all, and merely

felt that he was beginning to be feverish. The light of the candles hurt his eyes ; a mist filled the room and it seemed to him he was still in his prison cell, looking at the door and waiting, as he did when the shade appeared, for the door to open and Natasha to come in.

The door opened and Benckendorf appeared.

" Please go in," said he, pointing to the door and let him go first.

Ryleyev went in.

The Tsar was standing at the other end of the room. Ryleyev bowed, and was going to walk up to him.

" Stand still ! " said the Tsar, went up to Ryleyev and put both hands on his shoulders. " Walk back ! Walk back ! " He pressed him backwards in the direction of the table until the flame of the candles was right opposite Ryleyev's eyes. " Look me straight in the eyes ! That's right ! " He turned him with his face to the light. " You can go, and don't admit any one," he said to Benckendorf.

Benckendorf went out.

The Tsar looked for a long time into Ryleyev's eyes in silence.

" Honest, honest eyes ! A man with such eyes is incapable of lying," he said, as though to himself, and then asked after a pause : " What is your name ? "

" Ryleyev."

" Your Christian name ? "

" Kondraty."

" And your father's ? "

" Fyodor."

" Well, Kondraty Fyodorovitch, do you believe that I can forgive you ? "

Ryleyev did not answer. Nicolas brought his face still closer, looked into his eyes still more intently and

suddenly smiled. What was this? Ryleyev was more and more astonished: it seemed to him there was something entreating and piteous in the Tsar's smile.

"Poor things, both of us!" said Nicolas with a deep sigh. "We hate and fear one another. The hangman and his victim. But which is hangman and which is victim—there is no telling. And whose fault is it? Everybody's, and mine most of all. Well, forgive me. If you don't want me to forgive you, then you forgive me!" and he made a movement as though to kiss him.

Ryleyev turned pale and staggered.

"Sit down." The Tsar supported him and led him to an arm-chair. "There, drink this." He poured out a glass of water and gave him. "Well, are you better? Can you speak?"

"Yes, I can."

Ryleyev wanted to get up, but the Tsar would not let him.

"No, sit still." He brought up another chair for himself and sat down opposite Ryleyev. "Look here, Kondraty Fyodorovitch. You may think what you like about me, you may believe me or not, but I will tell you the whole truth. A heavy burden has been laid upon me by Providence. It's more than one man can bear. And I am alone, I have no help, no advice. I am a brigadier and nothing more. What do I know of politics? God is my witness, I never wanted to reign, and never thought I would have to—but here I am! If only you knew, Ryleyev—but no, you will never know, no one ever will, what I have felt and what I shall go on feeling all my life when I remember that awful day—the Fourteenth! Blood, blood—I am in blood all over—there is no washing it off, no atoning for it! I am not a brute, not a monster—I am a man,

Ryleyev, and I, too, am a father. You have Nastenka, I have Sasha. The Tsar is the father, the nation is his child. To drive a knife into one's child, into Sasha ! "

He covered his face with his hands, and remained so for a long time. At last he took them away and again placed them on Ryleyev's shoulders, looking into his eyes with a smile that seemed full of entreaty.

" You see, I speak to you as a friend, a brother. Be also a brother to me. Have pity on me, help me ! "

" Is he lying—or not ? Is he lying—or not ? Are you tempting me, devil ? Very well, then I'll tempt you too ! " Ryleyev suddenly grew angry.

" Do you wish to know the truth, your Majesty ? Very well, know it then : freedom is seductive, and inflamed by it, I seduced others too. And I do not repent. Have I wronged men because I passionately longed for their welfare ? It is not of myself I want to speak, but of my country, which so long as my heart is beating will remain dearer to me than all earthly goods, dearer than heaven itself ! "

He spoke as usual in a bookish, affected style, all the more so because he had thought out all this speech beforehand. Suddenly he jumped up from his chair and raised his arms ; his pale cheeks glowed, his eyes sparkled, his whole face was transfigured. He looked like the Ryleyev of the old days, the indomitable rebel—light, flying, impetuous, like a flame driven by the wind.

" Let me tell you this, sire : so long as there exist men, there will also exist a longing for freedom. To eradicate free-thinking in Russia, you must exterminate the whole generation of people who were born and grown up during the last reign. I say it confidently—out of a thousand you will barely find a hundred who are not consumed with a passion for liberty. And it is not in

Russia only—no, all the peoples of Europe are inspired by the same feeling, and however suppressed it may be, to destroy it is impossible. Consult history, name the country,—where and when were nations happy under the power of autocrats, without law, without right, without honour, without conscience? It is not we who are criminals, but those who humiliate humanity in our eyes. Ask yourself, what would you have done in our place if another man like yourself had the power to treat you like a soulless thing?"

The Tsar sat in silence, without moving, with his elbow on the arm of the chair and his head resting on his hand, listening calmly and attentively. And Ryleyev shouted and waved his arms, as though threatening some one, and kept getting up and sitting down again.

"It said in the manifesto that your reign will be the continuation of Alexander's. But surely, surely you must know that his reign was deadly for Russia? It is he who is really responsible for the Fourteenth. Was it not he who first gave Russian minds an enormous impetus towards the sacred rights of man, and then stopped them and turned them back? Was it not he who fanned in our hearts the flame of liberty, and then strangled liberty so cruelly? He deceived Russia, he deceived Europe. The gold chains wreathed in laurels have been taken off and the bare rusty ones oppress mankind. He ascended the throne as 'Blessed' and has gone down into his grave, cursed!"

"You keep talking about him, but what are you going to say about me?" asked the Tsar calmly.

"About you? Why, this! When you were only a grand-duke you were disliked already, and indeed there was nothing to like you for: your only occupation was military drill and soldiers, you cared for nothing but

military discipline ; we saw this and were afraid of having on the Russian throne a Prussian colonel or, worse still, another Arakcheyev, more terrible than the first. And we were right : you have made a bad beginning, your Majesty ! As you put it yourself just now, you have mounted the throne through the blood of your subjects ; you have driven a knife into the people, into your own child. . . . And now you repent, you shed tears, ask our forgiveness. If you are speaking the truth, give freedom to Russia—and we shall all be your most faithful servants. But if you are lying, take care : we have begun, others will finish. Blood for blood—upon your head, or the head of your son, your grandson, your great-grandson ! And then other nations will see that not one of them is so capable of rebellion as ours. This is no idle dream—my gaze pierces through the veil of time ! I see through a whole century ! There will be a revolution in Russia, there will ! And now you can hang me, kill me. . . ."

He sank into the chair, exhausted.

" Drink some water." The Tsar again poured out a glass of water. " Would you like some drops ? "

He ran to fetch some drops, counted them out into a wine-glass ; put smelling salts and ammonia under his nose. Ryleyev wanted to wipe the perspiration off his face, but could not find his handkerchief. The Tsar gave him his own. He bustled about, waited upon him, and took endless trouble. There was a snake-like caressiveness in the movements of his long, thin, lithe body. " A shade ! A shade ! A changeling ! " Ryleyev thought with terror.

" Good heavens ! Fancy going on like this ! There, there ! Lie down, have a rest. Will you have some wine or tea ? Or something to eat ? Supper ? "

"I don't want anything," Ryleyev moaned, and thought with anguish, "O Lord, when is it going to end?"

"Can you listen to me?" asked the Tsar, moved up his chair again, sat down and began:

"Well, thank you for the truth, my friend." He took hold of Ryleyev's hands and pressed them warmly. "Every one lies to us Tsars, and it isn't often we hear the truth. Yes, it is all true, except one thing: I shall not be a German on the Russian throne. Even if I have been, I shall not be. My grandmother, Empress Catherine, was also a German, but when she ascended the throne she became a Russian. It's the same with me. *Personne n'est plus russe de cœur que je ne le suis*," he said in French, but at once corrected himself. "We are both of us Russians," he said, "I—the Tsar, and you—the rebel. Tell me, please, could we have been speaking to each other as we are if we were not Russians?"

Something like a pale smile flitted across Ryleyev's face.

"Well, what is it?" The Tsar noticed it and smiled too. "Speak, don't be afraid—you see for yourself there is no need to fear the truth with me."

"You are very clever, sire."

"Ah, you thought I was a fool! Well, you see, in this at any rate you have made a mistake. No, I am not a fool. I understand what is wrong with Russia. I am the first citizen of my Fatherland. My only desire has been to see Russia free and happy. Do you know that even as a grand-duke I was quite as much of a liberal as you? But I kept quiet about it and did not let it out. If you live with wolves you must howl as they do. And so I howled with Arakcheyev. The worse the better. I was helping you. Well, tell me, only mind you tell

the truth, the whole truth, what was it you wanted—a constitution? A republic?"

"Of course he is lying! A shade, a shade, a changeling!" Ryleyev thought with horror again. But stronger than the horror was the eager curiosity: "And what if I try—not to believe him, but to pretend that I believe?"

"Why don't you speak? Don't you believe me? Are you afraid?"

"No, I am not afraid. I wanted a republic," answered Ryleyev.

"Well, thank God, that means you are an intelligent man!" The Tsar again shook both his hands warmly. "I understand autocracy, I understand a republic, but constitutional monarchy I do not understand. It's a sly, deceitful, immoral way of government. I should rather retreat to the walls of China than accept it. You see how frank I am with you—treat me in the same way!"

He looked at Ryleyev in silence for a while, and suddenly clutched at his own head.

"What was it that happened, then? What was it? Good God! Why? You did not know one of yourselves! I deceived every one—and you too. You rose against your friend, your accomplice! You should have come straight to me and said: This is what we want! And now . . . Listen, Ryleyev, perhaps it is not too late even now? Together we have sinned, together we shall repent. My grandmother used to say: 'I don't care for autocracy, I am a republican at heart, but the tailor has not been born yet who could cut a coat for Russia.' Let us cut it together. You are the best men in Russia; without you I can do nothing. Let us form an alliance, let us make a new conspiracy. Autocracy

is a great power. Take it from me. What do you want a revolution for? I am myself a revolution!"

As a man sliding down a precipice still tries to clutch at something, but already knows that he will let go and fly headlong down, so Ryleyev, though still terrified, was already rejoicing.

There was a gleam of joy in the Tsar's eyes.

"Wait, don't decide, think first. A man can speak as I am speaking now only once in his life. Remember, it is not your fate or mine that is being decided now, but the fate of Russia. As you say, so it shall be. Well, speak, do you want us to act together? Do you? Yes or no?"

He held out his hand. Ryleyev took it, wanted to say something and could not: there was a spasm in his throat. Tears mounted to his eyes and suddenly gushed out. He let go his hold—he flew headlong into the abyss, he believed.

"How I . . . What have I done! What have I done! How we all . . . no, I, I alone . . . I've ruined every one. Let it then all be ended with me! Put me to death, kill me, at once, at once, on the spot! And spare the others, the innocent. . . ."

"I will spare them all, and you with them! And it is not a case of sparing—I tell you, we shall work together!" said the Tsar, embracing Ryleyev, and he wept—or Ryleyev thought that he wept.

"You are weeping? Over whom? Over an assassin?" cried Ryleyev, and fell on his knees; his tears flowed still more sweetly, still more insatiably; he spoke as though he were delirious; he looked like one who is drunk or mad. "You remembered Nastenka's name-day! You knew how to pierce my soul! So that's what you are like! I feel the beating of your angelic

heart ! I am yours, yours for ever ! But I am of no account—fifty million are waiting for your mercy. Is it thinkable that a Tsar who shows favour to his would-be assassins should fail to desire the love of his subjects and the good of his country ? A father ! A father ! We are all like children in your hands ! I did not believe in God, but here it is—a divine miracle, God's anointed ! Our own father Tsar, our red sun. . . ."

" And you wanted to have us all butchered ? " the Tsar asked in a whisper.

" Yes, I did," Ryleyev answered also in a whisper, and terror again flashed like lightning in his consciousness —flashed and went out again.

" Who else wanted it ? "

" No one else. I alone."

" Didn't you incite Kahovsky ? "

" No, no, I didn't—it was his own wish. . . ."

" A-ah, his own. And Pestel, Muravyov, Bestuzhev ? In the Second Army there was a conspiracy too ? Do you know of it ? "

" Yes."

" Well, speak, tell me everything, don't be afraid— give me all the names. We must save them all so that no new victims should perish in vain. Will you tell me ? "

" I will. Why should a son conceal things from his father ? I could be your enemy, but I cannot be a scoundrel. I believe ! I believe ! Only just now I did not believe, but now . . . God is my witness, I believe you ! I will tell you everything. Ask ! "

He was kneeling down. The Tsar bent down to him and they began to whisper together like the confessor with the penitent or a lover with his mistress.

Ryleyev was giving away everything, naming every one —name after name, secret after secret.

It seemed to him now and again that the curtain over the door next to them moved slightly. He started every time, and turned round. Once, as he did so, the Tsar went up to the door as though he, too, were alarmed that some one might be eavesdropping.

"There is no one there. Do you see?" He opened the curtain so that Ryleyev almost saw what was behind it—almost, but not quite.

"Well, are you tired?" He glanced into Ryleyev's face and realized that it was time they stopped. "That's enough. Go and have a rest. If you have forgotten anything, try and remember it by to-morrow. Are you comfortable in your cell, isn't it dark or damp? Is there anything you want?"

"No, nothing, your Majesty. If only I could see my wife. . . ."

"You shall see her. As soon as we finish the cross-examination, you shall see each other. Don't trouble about your wife and Nastenka. They are mine. I will do everything for them."

He suddenly looked at Ryleyev, and shook his head with a mournful smile.

"How could you? What have I done to you?" He turned away with a sob that was almost genuine. He felt sorry for himself: "*Pauvre diable*," "Poor fellow," "Poor Nick!"

"Forgive me, forgive me, your Majesty!" Ryleyev fell at his feet and groaned as though wounded mortally. "No, don't forgive me! Hang me! Kill me! This is more than I can bear!"

"God will forgive. There, there," the Tsar embraced and kissed him, stroked his hair, wiped his tears with the same handkerchief with which he wiped his own. "Well, God bless you, till to-morrow. Sleep peacefully. Pray

for me, and I will pray for you. Let me make the sign of the cross over you. That's right. Christ be with you ! "

He helped Ryleyev to get up and going up to the door into the adjutants' room, called :

" Levashov ! See him out."

" Your handkerchief, your Majesty." Ryleyev gave him the handkerchief.

" Keep it as a memento," said the Tsar, and raised his eyes to heaven. " God sees that I would like to wipe with this handkerchief not your tears only but the tears of all who weep and are sorrowful and oppressed."

As Ryleyev went out he failed to notice that Benckendorf appeared from behind the heavy folds of the curtain which had kept moving during the interview.

" Have you got it down ? " asked the Tsar.

" There were a few things I didn't catch. But it is all done—we have all the names, all the threads of the conspiracy. I congratulate you, your Majesty."

" There's nothing to congratulate me on, my friend. That's what I have been brought to—I have turned into a detective ! "

" Not a detective, but a confessor. You read men's hearts. As the Apostle says of God's word, it is sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow."

" Ryleyev is to be kept at my expense," the Tsar wrote to Sukin, commandant of the fortress. " Give him tea, coffee, etc., and also paper for writing, and everything he writes is to be brought to me every day. Allow him to write and talk his nonsense as much as he likes."

" And the handkerchief, the handkerchief as a memento ! " said Benckendorf with a sob of delight and kissed

Nicolas on the shoulder. The Tsar looked at him in silence, but could not keep it up and burst into a low triumphant laugh. He felt that he had won a greater victory than in the Square on the Fourteenth.

He was still full of fear and hatred and his longing for contempt was not satisfied, but now he hoped that he would satisfy it.

V

GOLITSIN was recovering so rapidly that every one marvelled at it and ascribed it to the wonderful cleverness of the doctor. But the invalid knew it was Márinka and not the doctor who was curing him. Looking at her was like drinking the water of life, and he fancied that had he been dying he would have risen from the dead.

Some five days after the morning when he first regained consciousness he began to get up and walk about the room.

One day the grandmamma's butler announced that some "fellow" wanted to see the prince, but would not give his name. Golitsin told him to show the man in.

When the visitor came in he did not know him at first; but looking into his prominent pale-blue eyes, sad and tender, he fell on his neck.

"Kühelbeker!"

"Why, didn't you recognize me, Golitsin?"

"Take off your beard, do! You look a regular Jew!"

"I can't, it's stuck on."

Golitsin made his visitor sit down and shut the door. Kühelbeker began telling him what had happened. Nearly all the conspirators had been seized, and those that

had not yet, gave themselves up of their own accord. A supreme Committee of Investigation had been appointed, but the Tsar was conducting the case himself. There would be no mercy : some would be executed, others exiled or immured in prisons.

" Has no one been killed ? "

" No one, not even wounded."

" Extraordinary ! And under what fire we stood ! . . ."

" Perhaps this is not for nothing," he thought. " Perhaps fate preserves us for a greater deed than death ? "

" And what about the Southern Army and the Caucasian Corps ? "

" Nothing at all. No, Golitsin, there is no more hope—all is over. . . . But to come to the point, would you like to escape with me ? "

" With you ? Why, of course ! You are just the right man to escape with ! You are so artful, no misadventures ever happen to you. . . . Come, my dear fellow, the first policeman you meet will grab you."

" Don't laugh, Golitsin. It's quite a serious offer. Everything is ready: passports, money, and reliable men."

" No, Kühelbeker, you won't be able to live away from Russia."

" Yes, I will. We are strangers in Russia, too. I don't know how you feel, Golitsin, but to me all Russia seems now soiled, smeared with blood. Black days have come, and they have come to stay—perhaps for the next fifty, perhaps for a hundred years. We shall have time to die in a barren desert far from the Holy Land, far from Zion where one may live and sing lofty songs.

Slaves who drag their fetters after them
Have no lofty songs to sing.

Well, what do you say, my friend? Won't you?"

"No, Kühelbeker, I don't feel like it, somehow. And I am too ill to face a journey in the winter's frost."

"Well, as you like. But do think it over,—perhaps you will change your mind? I will call again."

"Do come, I will think about it," said Golitsin, just to get rid of him, and an unkind thought crossed his mind: "He is a German—that's why he is running away." But he felt at once ashamed of it, and they parted as affectionately as they had met.

When his guest had gone, Golitsin began to think—not of flight, but of what would happen when he is seized.

He remembered his conversation with Nina Lvovna the day before.

She began by talking of how helpless she felt after her husband's death, of Márinka's being fatherless, of her confidence in Golitsin and in the purity of his intentions, and in conclusion unexpectedly asked him, pointblank:

"Do you think, prince, this affair will end safely for you?"

"What affair?" He understood at once, but pretended that he did not: he was frightened and ashamed: "It is as though I had seduced the daughter, and the mother knew of it."

"Why, this awful business of the Fourteenth. Forgive me for putting it so bluntly. But I am a mother. And you are a man of honour and feeling—you will understand a mother's heart. Speak then, speak, Valeryan Mihailovitch, decide our fate!"

"Very well, Nina Lvovna. You have asked me plainly, and I will answer in the same way. No, this

affair will not end safely for me : I shall be arrested, put upon trial and sentenced, if not to death, to prison or penal servitude."

Nina Lvovna turned so pale that he was afraid she might faint.

" What will become of Márinka then ? " She clasped her hands and wept. " What am I to do ? What am I to do ? Help me, prince, advise me. . . ."

Her face looked for a moment like the face of weeping Márinka. Golitsin took her hands and kissed them with respectful tenderness.

" I have deeply wronged you, Nina Lvovna. But I give you my word of honour : I will do all I can to make Marya Pavlovna forget me, and you had better go with her to Birdcherrylands as soon as possible."

Their conversation ended with that. And now when he recalled it he realized that he had laid upon himself a burden beyond his strength. " I will make her forget me,"—it was easy to say. The more he thought, the more guilty he felt of some sin for which there was no atonement. A girl who knew nothing of life, almost a child, and he was dragging her after him to face suffering which he might not himself be able to endure. He had clutched at her like a man who is drowning, and was pulling her to the bottom.

He was sitting by the window in the yellow room. It was past eleven, but it was not yet quite daylight. The snowstorm had plastered the windows with snow. The old trees in the garden rustled and waved to and fro. The wind howled in the chimney pitifully and mournfully.

" What are you thinking about ? " he heard Márinka's voice and started. She had come in so quietly that he had not heard her.

He smiled at her as he always did when she came into the room, but said nothing.

On one of the pegs by the door hung his overcoat, the one he had had on in the Square. Márinka took it, and sitting down to a work-table, began darning the little round holes made by the bullets.

"Your visitor must have upset you. Who was he?" she asked without raising her eyes.

"An old friend, Wilhelm Karlovitch Kühelbeker."

"Was he in the Square with you?"

"Yes."

"What did you speak of, if it isn't a secret?"

"He offered me to escape with him."

"And what did you say?"

"I don't want to."

"Why not?"

"I cannot do without Russia . . . and without you."

"Why without me? I shall be with you."

"And Nina Lvovna?"

"Mamma too. And if she doesn't want to, never mind, I shall go without her. Wherever you go, I shall go with you. Do you see the needle and the thread? Where the needle goes, the thread follows."

He watched in silence how quickly the needle moved in her delicate fingers. She was darning the round holes calmly and cheerfully.

"I keep thinking, Márinka, of what will happen to you when I am taken."

"But perhaps you won't be?"

"I am sure I shall."

"Well, the same thing will happen to me as to you," she answered calmly, as though she had settled it all long ago.

They were silent again.

"Márinka, will you do what I ask you?"

"What is it?"

"Promise."

"Why? You know I will."

"Everything?"

"Why, of course." She smiled the charming smile that he loved so much.

He waited, plucked up his courage.

"Go to Birdcherrylands as soon as possible," he said firmly at last.

She stopped sewing, raised her eyes and looked at him long and attentively, but as calmly as before, as though trying to understand.

"But what will you do without me?"

"It will be better for me."

"Better to be alone?"

He nodded without speaking.

"It isn't true. Why do you say what isn't true?"

"Yes, it is true."

She looked at him still more calmly, still more attentively and all at once she understood.

"Very well. Only you, too, do what I ask you. Tell me that you don't love me . . . that you don't love me in *that* way."

"How—not in that way?"

"Why, like this: if you squeeze the hand—it hurts, and if you touch the wound, it's unbearable. That's how I love you, and don't you too? Only say 'not like that'—and I will go."

There was calm determination in her face and voice. He realized that she meant what she said: if he really pronounced these words, she would go, and all would be over.

She waited for a time without speaking ; then she got up, went up to him, bent down, put her arms round his head and kissed him on the forehead.

" You silly ! Good heavens, what a silly you are ! " She smiled as she had done during his illness, and it seemed to him again that he really was a silly child, and she—grown up : that she might any moment pick him up and carry him in her arms like a child.

She went back to her work-table and began darning the holes again.

" Well, and now tell me what it is you have done. I want to know everything."

" But what am I to tell you, Márinka ? It's politics, you know, a very dull subject."

" You mean it's beyond me ? Well, never mind, perhaps I'll understand."

" To talk politics to a girl of eighteen, what next ! " he thought, and he began reluctantly.

When he came to speak of Sofya Naryshkin she listened with intense attention. He knew that she understood everything, and yet he shrank from telling her of how he had planned to kill Sofya's father, Emperor Alexander. He wanted to keep it back and could not —he told that too.

Sometimes people came in and interrupted them ; but as soon as they were left alone, she urged him :

" Well, go on, go on. What happened next ? " When it grew dark and the candles were lighted they settled in the blue drawing room—the one where they had seen each other for the last time before the Fourteenth. Here no one disturbed them.

Márinka sat in the same place as then, by the window, where the embroidery frame stood. A lamp with an opaque globe was burning dimly in the corner, and

oblique squares of moonlight fell on to the floor from the windows. The snowstorm stopped towards evening. Broken clouds, dark and light, with a sheen as of mother-of-pearl, sped across the sky like phantoms and the transparent flowers of frost on the windows sparkled like pale sapphires.

Golitsin was telling about the Southern Secret Society, about Sergey Muravyov and his Catechism. And from the way Márinka listened, he saw she realized that this was what mattered to him most.

"The Tsars are cursed by God as the oppressors of the people," he recited from memory the words of the Catechism. "To set our country free we must all together rise up against tyranny and re-establish Christian faith and freedom in Russia. Let us repent of the servility we have so long been guilty of and swear that there shall be but one King in heaven and on earth—Jesus Christ."

"But Christ is in heaven, isn't He?" she said with simple-hearted wonder.

"And on earth too, Márinka."

"Where? It doesn't look like it," she wondered still more naïvely.

"It doesn't, because instead of Christ being our King, our King is the Beast. We must kill the Beast."

"But how can you kill for Christ's sake?"

He had feared that she would not understand, and now it terrified him that she understood too well. A girl of eighteen, almost a child, discovered his inmost secret, his deepest pain.

Suddenly she got up, bent down, put both her hands on his shoulders and looked into his eyes.

"Valeryan Mihailovitch, are you sure you believe in Christ?"

"Why, Márinka . . ."

"Do you believe? Yes?"

"I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds," said Golitsin solemnly.

"Well, thank God!" she sighed with relief, and crossed herself. "You know, everybody says that rebels are atheists, and so I wondered. . . . Well, go on, go on. What happened next?"

When he told her how on the Fourteenth Nicolas shot down a defenceless crowd in the Square, she turned pale and whispered:

"Yes, to kill the Beast."

She did not ask this time: "How can you kill for Christ's sake?" And he felt that she not merely understood, but accepted everything to the end, and that in this inmost secret, in this uttermost pain she would never forsake him, but with him would face the condemnation of men and the judgment of God.

When he had finished, Márinka went and sat by him on the arm of his chair, and as during his illness, pressed her cheek against his. They were both of them silent, watching the torn clouds flying across the sky, the moon which now hid itself and now appeared again, and the flowers of the frost in the windows that sparkled like pale sapphires in its rays.

"Do you remember, Márinka, you said that to love the earth was a sin, one ought to love heavenly things?"

"No, I don't think I do. Let me see. . . . Ah, yes, that night in the coach, on the way from Moscow. Why did it come into your mind? And what of it?"

"Why, one's country is the earth too. But is it a sin to love it?"

"How can it be! I suppose it was silly what I said?"

"No, not silly; but it's not the whole. But perhaps no one knows the whole about it. . . ."

He spoke calmly. But Márinka felt again that this was what mattered to him most. She raised her head and looked into his eyes.

"No one knows about what?" she asked in a whisper.

"About earth and heaven. How to love earth and heaven together," he answered, also in a whisper.

"Together," she repeated, and was silent for a time, lost in thought. "Why, you love Sofya and me together, don't you?"

She was silent once more, pondering still more deeply. Then she began with such an expression in her face as he had never seen in it before:

"Once long, long ago, I remember it as though it were a dream—I was quite a child then—father and I went out in a boat. We have a water-mill at Birdcherrylands quite near the house; the river is stopped with a dam, and the water is still and even like a mirror. We were a long time in the boat, till evening; the sun had set and the night was coming on. And the water became so still that it seemed it was not there at all—there was nothing but air, and we were floating on it. There were big, round, white clouds in the sky, and through them the stars were shining. And below, under the boat, too, there were clouds and stars. It was as though there were two heavens—one above and one below, and we were between. It was terrifying and lovely. As lovely as being with you now. . . . That was *it*, wasn't it? You won't say it wasn't, you can't!"

"That was it, Márinka, of course it was."

Both were silent : there were no words left—they came to an end like a narrow path at the edge of a precipice. They looked at each other smiling, and said nothing. Their smiles drew nearer and nearer—and at last merged in a kiss.

When he came to himself she was already standing by the window, saying something to him ; it took him a long time to realize what it was.

" Do you remember how on the eve of the Fourteenth you said you were going to die for me also ? Why for me also ? I asked you then, but you didn't say."

" Because it was for Russia. And you are also . . . Márinka, do you know who you are ? "

" Well, who ? "

He did not answer and looked at her : all white in the white moonlight, against the sapphire blue shimmer of the frost-flowers, she was herself and not herself, distant and near, earthly and heavenly.

" Well, who am I ? " She stole a glance at him, and at once looked down again : she felt frightened. It was as though he were looking not at her, but through her at another.

Something pierced his heart like lightning. He sank on his knees.

" My own ! My own ! My own ! " he kept repeating, as though these two words contained all that he felt, and he kissed her feet.

As heaven and earth in the last reckoning are one, so Sofya and Márinka ; both together—the earthly and the heavenly ; and in both of them—the One and Only.

He was not afraid of anything now—neither of chains, nor of torture, nor of death. He knew that She will defend him from everything—the Invincible Shield, the

Eternal Defender, the Sudden Joy. And if they sent him to hell, She would come down to him even there, into the outer darkness,—and the darkness would be the light. And the Seed of the Woman should crush the Serpent's head.

On January 7th, the first day when marriages could be celebrated after the Advent fast, Golitsin was married to Márinka, and on the following night he was arrested.

VI

"IT'S all right, all is well," thought Golitsin, looking at the green, smoky and dirty wall. The long, narrow, low-vaulted, cupboard-like sentry-room on the ground-floor of the Winter Palace had no windows, and light came into it through the glass door of the corridor. A sentry stood by the door and kept peeping in ; all those who passed by did the same. To escape their glances Golitsin sat with his back to the door and stared at the wall.

This was the second night he was spending on a hard, rickety, cane-bottomed chair, wrapping himself up in his coat for warmth. His legs were numb, his back ached. He wanted to lie down on the old leather sofa, but the bugs were too much for him. He tried to lie down on the floor with his coat under him, but such cold draughts came from under the door and from a stack of frozen logs in the corner by the stove that had not been lighted, that he was afraid of catching cold : he was still far from well. He settled on the chair again in resignation : " It's all right like this, all is well."

He remembered how when he was led to the sentry-room he slackened his pace on the dark stairs, and one

of the convoy struck him with the butt-end of the rifle on the shoulder ; he turned round ; the soldier, a young snub-nosed, blear-eyed lad with no moustache or eyebrows, looked at him sulkily but not angrily, and said : " There, don't you dawdle, you son of a bitch, hurry up ! " " That, too, is all right," thought Golitsin, recalling this.

And when he was brought into the guard-room, the sergeant on duty, reeking of vodka and tobacco, began searching him. The fat fingers with red hairs and freckles crept about his body, groping and fumbling. The sergeant took away the locket with Sofya's portrait and tied his hands behind his back so tightly that the rope cut into the skin. In the morning one of the officers on duty had pity and ordered them to untie him. But his arms still ached. Golitsin raised his hands and looked at the red trace left by the rope on his wrists. " This, too, is all right," he thought.

" And Márinka is not Márinka any longer, but Princess Marya Pavlovna Golitsin," he remembered suddenly with joyful surprise. He still could not understand how it had happened. " We are going to be married to-morrow," she had said to him the day before. He wondered why it was to be so soon, made objections, asked her to wait. But she would not listen to anything : she had decided it was to be the next day, and that was the end of it. She had thought it all out long ago, and arranged everything together with Foma Fomitch, without saying a word to her mother or the grandmamma. No one in the house except the old butler knew anything, not even the servants. The grandmamma was ill in bed, and Nina Lvovna had gone in the morning to spend the day with her old school friend at the other end of the town. An old priest from the Veterans' Home, who had

served in the same regiment with Foma Fomitch, and "was good at arranging marriages at breakneck speed," married them in the private chapel at the grandmamma's house.

Golitsin submitted, but could not take it in. During the marriage service "he stood like a post," as Foma Fomitch said jokingly. It was very close in the tiny chapel from the lighted candles and incense; he felt giddy, and was afraid he would faint.

He was tired and went to bed early. In the night when he was already asleep, Márinka quietly, on tiptoe, came into his room, sat on the edge of his bed, bent down, put her arms round him and woke him with a kiss; she had never before kissed him like that; he felt that in that kiss she gave him her soul "All is well now, all is well! Don't you understand?" she whispered into his ear and before he had time to realize what was happening, she freed herself from his arms and ran off to her mother's bedroom. And he dropped fast asleep again, sweetly and stupidly; as he was going off he actually thought that it was stupid to sleep on such a night.

And the following night he was arrested. When Shulgin, the chief of police, with a courier and four soldiers, brought him into the hall, Márinka ran out to him, half dressed; she just had time to embrace him, make the sign of the cross over him and whisper into his ear: "Don't be uneasy about me, think of yourself only. The Mother Immaculate guard you!" And as he was going down the stairs, she leaned over the banisters and looked at him for the last time: there was neither fear nor sorrow in her eyes, nothing but the infinite power of love. He kept trying to remember of whom those eyes reminded him, and he could not.

He grew tired of looking at the wall, leaned his elbows on the table, closed his eyes and began to think. As during his illness, he whispered tenderly and exultantly : " Márinka . . . little mother ! " and it seemed to him she was taking him into her arms and rocking him to sleep.

He was awakened by the knocking of rifles and the clink of spurs. He thought he had slept a long time, but it was only some ten minutes. It was about nine o'clock in the evening.

" Take the prisoner to the Emperor," said some one's voice. The escort surrounded him and took him along endless corridors and staircases. They entered a suite of rooms hung with pictures. He recognized the Hermitage. In a large hall so many candles were burning that he wondered if there was going to be a ball. Then he grasped that light was necessary in order that the slightest changes of expression could be observed while the prisoners were being examined. It was light below, but above the night sky looked abysmally black through the glass roof.

In the corner by the wall under " The Holy Family," by Domenichino, at an open card-table with papers, ink and pens on it, sat a young man wearing the tight red gold-embroidered uniform of the Life Guard Hussars—general aide-de-camp Levashov.

The escort brought Golitsin up to the table ; two of the soldiers stood at the door with drawn swords.

" Pray be seated, prince," said Levashov, half getting up and bowing amiably—not offering to shake hands, however—and motioned Golitsin to a chair. " I believe we have met at your uncle Prince Alexander Nikolaevitch's," he began in French, with an air as though instead of being prisoner and detective they were two visitors

who had met at somebody's house and were chatting together while waiting for their host.

"Have you been in the army?"

"Yes, I have."

"In what regiment?"

"In the Preobrazhensky."

"How long is it since you left it?"

"A couple of years."

Golitsin observed Levashov closely: his face was neither kind nor unkind, only indifferent; his eyes were neither stupid nor intelligent, only rather sly. An adroit society young man, a fine hussar, probably an excellent dancer and horseman; a "good fellow," one of those who live and let live.

Golitsin raised his hands, and showed him the trace left by the ropes. Levashov frowned:

"They've been over-zealous again. I've told them about it time after time!"

"Do you tie everybody's hands here?"

"Almost everybody's. It's the custom. There's nothing for it, you know—it's the arrest house."

"A police station?"

"Something like it."

"Fancy turning the palace into a police station!"

Levashov made no answer.

"Well, let us begin," he said, changing the amiable expression of his face to a business-like one, not stern, but merely bored and slightly contemptuous as though he understood that the work was not quite clean. He took a piece of paper, sharpened a pen and dipped it in ink.

"Have you sworn allegiance to the Emperor Nicolas?"

"No, I haven't."

"Why not?"

"Because swearing allegiance involves an oath and a ceremony which I regard as unseemly."

"Will you swear allegiance to no one, then?"

"To no one."

"But how can you do without? You believe in God, don't you?"

"Yes, I do."

"And the oath of allegiance is from God?"

"No, it is not."

"Well, we won't argue about it. Am I to write it down like this?"

"Do."

Levashov's face looked more indifferent than ever. "You are damaging your case very seriously, prince. Think it over."

"I have thought of nothing but this all my life, your Excellency."

"And this is what you have arrived at?"

"Yes, it is."

Levashov smiled, shrugged his shoulders, twisted his thin moustache with a deft habitual gesture, wrote down Golitsin's words, and continued, looking still more bored:

"Did you belong to the Secret Society?"

"I did."

"Which of its actions are known to you?"

"None."

Levashov was silent for a time; he looked at the nib of his pen, took a speck of dust off it, and raised his eyes to Golitsin.

"Do not imagine, prince, that the Government knows nothing. We have definite information that what happened on the Fourteenth was only a premature outburst, and that as early as last year you had intended

to deal a blow at the late Emperor. If you like, I will tell you the details of the regicide you contemplated. Last year, at the beginning of May, a meeting took place here in Petersburg at the flat of Mr. Ryleyev, an author, and the president of the Tulchinsky Section of the Southern Secret Society, Lieutenant-Colonel Pestel, proposed to exterminate all the members of the Imperial family. Do you know about this ? "

" No, I don't."

" Don't you know either who it was answered Pestel, ' I thoroughly agree with you ' ? "

" I don't know either."

" Perhaps you could recall it ? "

" No, I could not."

" Your Excellency has a bad memory." Levashov smiled again and twisted his moustache. " Well, I will remind you : those were your own words. And now will you please name those of your comrades who were present at that meeting."

" Excuse me, your Excellency, I can't possibly do that."

" Why not ? "

" Because when I entered the Society I swore not to name anyone."

Levashov put down his pen and leaned back in his chair.

" Look here, Golitsin. The longer you refuse to give evidence, the worse for you. You want to save your comrades, but you will save no one, and merely ruin yourself. I tell you, the Government knows everything already and your confession is needed for your own sake : whole-hearted repentance is the only way to the Tsar's mercy." He repeated words which he had evidently learnt by heart. " Well, why don't you speak ? Don't you want to say anything ? "

"I don't want to."

"Then you will be *made* to speak, sir." Levashov slightly raised his voice and emphasized every word, speaking slowly and distinctly. "I enter upon my duties as a judge and inform you that there is such a thing as torture in Russia."

"I am much obliged to your Excellency for this confidence, but I am bound to say that now I feel it more than ever my duty not to name anyone," said Golitsin, looking him straight in the eyes, and thought: "He is a good fellow, but he will roast one's heels if he is ordered to."

"*Pour cette fois, je ne vous parle pas comme votre juge, mais comme un gentilhomme votre égal,*" Levashov began with his former amiability. "I don't understand, prince, your wanting to be a martyr for the sake of those who have given you away."

"You don't understand my wanting not to be a blackguard, your Excellency?"

Levashov winced slightly, but the good fellow was not offended: he decided that a prisoner could not be expected to think of manners.

"Will you kindly read this and sign it," he said, giving him the paper.

Golitsin looked and saw that the general wrote Russian like a cobbler, and signed without reading. Levashov got up and straightened himself; the tight uniform clasped his body still more closely—it seemed a fine fellow like that ought be dancing the Mazurka with beautiful ladies or galloping on horseback in the fire of battle instead of slaving over papers. He pulled the bell; when the courier ran in, he motioned Golitsin to a green silk screen that stood near the table:

"Will you please wait."

And he went out with the courier. Golitsin sat down behind the screen.

A door opened at the other end of the room and someone came in ; from behind the screen one could not see who it was, but judging from the voices there were two of them. Talking on the way they came up to the table and stopped. They could not see Golitsin either. He listened.

" I made revelations without consulting my reason, obeying the impulse of my heart full of gratitude to his Majesty, and I have said things which other people would perhaps have kept back. . . ."

Golitsin did not catch what came after, and then again he heard :

" It is easy to perish oneself, your Excellency, but to be the cause of other people's ruin is agony beyond endurance. . . ."

Golitsin knew the voice, and yet he failed to recognize it. He got up, went on tiptoe to the screen and peeped out. The two men were standing with their backs to him, and he did not see their faces. But he recognized one of them : it was Benckendorf. And the other one he recognized and yet did not recognize—he could not believe his eyes.

" Do not trouble, my friend, he will spare them all," Benckendorf began, and taking his companion's arm, led him past the screen. Golitsin saw face to face the man—unrecognized, unrecognizable : it was Ryleyev. They looked each other in the eyes.

Golitsin sank back into the chair. The light seemed to have gone out before his eyes, as though the abysmally black sky yawning through the glass roof had fallen upon him.

" Will you come, please ? " said Levashov, peeping behind the screen.

Golitsin recovered himself, got up and came out. The Tsar was approaching him from the other end of the room. The pale immovable face as though chiselled in marble was drawing near and he suddenly remembered how during the cannonade on the Fourteenth in the Senate Square he ran with a pistol in his hand to kill the Beast.

Coming up to the table, the Tsar stopped within two paces of the prisoner, measured him from head to foot with his eyes, and pointed with his finger to Levashov's note which was in his other hand.

"What rigmarole is this, eh? You are asked about business and you answer nonsense: that the oath of allegiance is not from God? Do you know our laws, sir? Do you know what the penalty for this is?" He moved his hand across his neck.

Golitsin smiled: what could this man do to him after the horror he had just been through?

"What are you laughing at?" asked the Tsar, frowning.

"I am surprised, your Majesty: if you threaten, you should threaten first with death and then with torture: torture is more terrible than death, you know."

"Who has threatened you with torture?"

"His Excellency."

Nicolas looked at Levashov, Levashov at Nicolas, and Golitsin at them both.

"You are a bold one, it seems!" the Tsar began again. "You are not afraid of anything here, but there? What awaits you in the next world? Eternal damnation. . . . Do you laugh at that too? Aren't you a Christian?"

"I am a Christian, your Majesty, that is why I rebelled against autocracy."

"Autocracy is from God. The Tsar is God's anointed. Have you rebelled against God?"

"No, against the Beast."

"What beast? Are you raving?"

"The Beast is the man who makes himself God," said Golitsin slowly and solemnly as though he were pronouncing the words of an incantation, and he turned pale; he was breathless with joy: he fancied he was killing the Beast.

"Ah, you unfortunate man!" The Tsar shook his head with commiseration. "Your mind is wandering. This is what these diabolical ideas, the fruit of pride and vanity, have brought you to. I am sorry for you. Why are you ruining yourself? Don't you see that I wish you well?" he said, after a pause, in a different kind voice. "Why don't you answer me?" He took Golitsin's hand and continued still more kindly, "You know I can do anything—I can forgive you. . . ."

Golitsin remembered Ryleyev and shuddered.

"That's just the trouble, your Majesty, that you can do anything: God in heaven and you on earth. This is precisely what it means—to make a man into God. . . ."

The Tsar had realized some time ago that he would get nothing from Golitsin. He examined him from a sheer sense of duty. He was not angry. After conducting the investigation for a month he had brought himself to such a pitch that he was never moved to anger during the cross-examination of the prisoners. But he was bored. It was time to finish.

"Well, this will do, I have had enough of your nonsense," he interrupted with sudden rudeness. "Please answer the questions properly."

"I have already told his Excellency that I have given my word . . ."

"I don't want to hear about his Excellency and your dirty word!"

"That one writes like a cobbler and this one talks like one," thought Golitsin.

"So you won't speak? You won't? For the last time I ask you, you won't?"

Golitsin said nothing. The Tsar's face changed instantly: one mask was dropped, another one put on—wrathful, menacing, pale as though chiselled in marble: Apollo Belvedere striking down the Python. He took a step back, stretched out his hand and shouted:

"Put him into fetters so that he can't move."

At that moment Benckendorf came in. The Tsar turned to him and again one mask fell, another one was put on: "Poor fellow, poor Nick."

Benckendorf went up to Nicolas and whispered something in his ear. Not looking at Golitsin and as though at once forgetting him, the Tsar went out.

"Will you wait, please." Levashov again motioned Golitsin to a chair behind the screen, and went out with Benckendorf.

Golitsin sat down in his old place. He was quite calm and peaceful now. "Well, it's all right, all is well again," he thought as he had done before. "Wanting to be a martyr for those who have given you away? Why, of course I want it."

He whispered the words, "Why, of course," with the same childish smile as Márinka.

VII

THE screen stood by a door Behind the door there was the sound of footsteps and voices. Another door, the one through which the Tsar had gone out, was

opened, some one ran out of it and Levashov's voice shouted :

" Call the surgeon to bleed him ! "

" There is such a thing as torture in Russia," Golitsin remembered, and he listened to what was happening behind the door. A heavy curtain deadened the sounds. He looked out from behind the screen. There was no one in the room except two sentries who stood like two statues by the door at the other end.

Parting the curtain Golitsin saw that the door behind it was slightly opened. He peeped through the crack—it was dark : the door was double. He opened it and went into the dark space between the doors. He stumbled against a chair : probably during the cross-examinations some one sat here and listened ; the second door was also slightly opened and covered with a curtain on the other side. Opening it wider he gently parted the second curtain and looked.

The small room, hung with pictures, mostly copies of the old Italian painters of the school of Perugino and Raphael, was like the big one, lighted with a great number of candles. Directly opposite to him some one was lying on the sofa. Benckendorf was sitting in an arm-chair with his back to Golitsin in front of the man on the sofa, so that only the feet covered with a shawl and a corner of a white pillow were visible. Several other men were standing and sitting in the room : Levashov, the palace commandant, Bashutsky, the chief of police, Shulgin, and a civilian in a black tail-coat, a wig and spectacles, who looked like a Jew—probably the doctor.

" How do you feel, my friend ? " asked Benckendorf.

" Well, wonderfully well," answered the man on the sofa. " I have never felt better."

"Have you a headache?"

"No, it's gone. It's all gone. My spirit is awake, my mind is fresh, my soul is calm. My heart is young and innocent as before. Oh never, never have I been so happy! Even there, in the prison cell, I had moments of such bliss that I went mad—I talked and talked and talked,—I poured out my feelings to the deaf walls! I want to talk, dreadfully. Let me talk, your Excellency!"

"Do, only don't get excited or you will be ill again."

"No, I shall be well, all is well now! I will tell everything. I thought before one ought to keep back the names, but now I think: whom am I to keep them back from? From an angel? For the Tsar is an angel, not a man, I see it myself now. And you too—why should I keep back the names from such men as you? One need expect nothing but good of you. You shall know all. I'll tell you everything. I will show you the very root of it. The work will go apace. I will act with conviction now . . . I like it. I will do my best, your Excellency! You shall see. I will report systematically. I will deal with each regiment. I will not conceal a single name. I will name men of whom otherwise you would never have heard. But where is *he*? Why is he not here? I want to tell him. . . ."

"First tell us and then him," said Benckendorf.

"No, no, first to him, the angel! I want to go to him. . . . Why don't you let me? You must let me. I demand it!" He sat up suddenly, as though intending to jump up and run.

Seeing his face,—which, like the face of Ryleyev just now, he did not, could not, recognize,—it was Prince Alexander Ivanovitch Odoevsky—Golitsin drew back, sank on to the chair, shut his eyes, stopped his ears so as not to see, not to hear. But it was

not for long : eager curiosity possessed him again. He got up, again parted the curtain and peeped out.

Odoevsky was half reclining on the sofa, so that now Golitsin could see his face. He looked almost well, perhaps because there was a glow of fever in his cheeks. It was the same " dear Sasha," " gentle boy " ; the same half-girlish, half-childish charm :

" Like a spring flower under the reaper's deadly sickle."

" Up to the Fourteenth I was quite innocent," he was saying as trustfully, calmly and cheerfully as though he were speaking to his dearest friends. " I was educated at home. *Maman m'a donné une éducation exemplaire.* To the time of her death she never took her eyes off me. I simply adored my mother. . . . But what is the good of talking about it ? When she died, I nearly died too. I entered the regiment. At twenty I was quite a child. I am careless, light and lazy by nature. I have never had any troubles, I was too happy. My life was in full flower. I wrote poetry, I dreamed of the golden age. Like all young men, I talked of liberty without intending anything. Ryleyev too. So we made friends."

" Was it Ryleyev admitted you into the Secret Society ? " asked Benckendorf.

" No, it was not he. I don't remember who it was. And there was no admission to speak of. It was all childishness, a foolish prank, emanating from Ryleyev's heated brain. What can be done by thirty or forty boys—dreamers, romancers, ' sleep-walkers,' as Golitsin called us ? "

" Which Golitsin ? Prince Valeryan Mihailovitch ? " asked Levashov.

" Yes. Why ? "

" Was it he who said in answer to Pestel's proposal

to exterminate all the members of the Imperial family, 'I thoroughly agree with you'?"

"Perhaps. I don't remember."

"Please try to remember."

"What do you want it for?"

"It's very important."

"It's not at all important. Nonsense! Your Excellency, why does he ask me like this? Forbid him. We are not spies or detectives here."

Benckendorf winked at Levashov.

"Don't be angry, my friend, he won't do it again. You were going to tell us how you spent the day of the Fourteenth."

"Yes, I was. But it all seems like a dream—and there is no telling a dream. All night I stood on duty at the Palace; I did not close my eyes and was dog-tired. The blood rushed to my head—it often happens to me if I don't sleep. In the morning I called at Loreda's coffee-house and bought some sweets, lemon drops. I am very fond of them. Then I was going home, to sleep. And then suddenly I found myself in the Square. They got me to come inside the column. Twenty times I tried to go; they hugged and kissed me,—I stayed, I didn't myself know why. . . ."

"Did you hold a pistol in your hand?" asked Benckendorf.

"A pistol? Perhaps. Some one must have put it into my hand."

Levashov began writing something in pencil on a scrap of paper.

"Your Excellency, why does he write it down? The pistol is nothing. And I don't remember it. Perhaps I never had it."

"And did you see them shoot Count Miloradovitch?"

"Yes. I did."

"Who shot him?"

"That I did not see."

"It's a pity. You might have saved an innocent man."

"Ech, gentlemen, that's not it again. . . . Must you really know it?"

"We must."

"Well, let me say it into your ear."

Benckendorf bent down, and Odoevsky whispered something into his ear.

"And afterwards, when the firing was over," he began aloud again, and as calmly and cheerfully as before, "I went across the Neva to the Vassilyevsky and from there to the Moïka, to an author, Jandry. When Jandry's old lady saw me—she is very fond of me—she wailed 'Run away.' She threw me some money. I lost my head still more. I went without knowing where. I wanted to hide under the ground, under the ice. People looked into my eyes like crows into the eyes of a man who is dying. I spent the night in a ditch under the bridge. I fell into a hole in the ice, nearly drowned, was frozen. I felt death was coming. I climbed out, mad. In the morning I set off again. I walked about for two days, God only knows where. I have been to Katerinhof, to Krasnoe. I bought a sheepskin coat and a cap, dressed like a peasant. I came back to Petersburg, and went to my uncle Vassya Lanskoy, the minister. He promised to hide me and instead went and reported me to the police. It was a bad look-out, I thought. So I came to you. . . ."

"You didn't come of yourself, you were brought," Bashutsky corrected him.

"Was I? I don't remember. I wanted to come.

There is no escaping in Russia. I have experienced it myself. A Russian is brave as a sword, firm as a flint, so long as he has God and the Tsar in his soul,—and without them he is a rag, a scoundrel. Like I am now. I am a scoundrel, your Excellency, eh ? " He suddenly turned to Benckendorf and looked straight at him.

" Why ? On the contrary, you are an honourable man : you have erred and you have repented."

" That isn't true ! I see from your eyes that it isn't. You say ' an honourable man ' and you think ' a scoundrel.' And you, too, gentlemen,"—he slowly looked from one to the other, and his face became pale and distorted—" you listen to a scoundrel ! You are a nice lot ! I am going out of my mind and you listen, take advantage ! Oh Lord ! What are you doing to me ! Torturers ! Hangmen ! I curse you ! "

Golitsin drew back once more, shut his eyes, stopped his ears, so as not to see, not to hear. But not for long : eager curiosity again overmastered him : he parted the curtain, peeped out and listened.

Odoevsky lay without speaking or moving, with his eyes shut ; he seemed unconscious. Then he opened his eyes and began speaking very rapidly and indistinctly, as though in delirium :

" Well, so be it ! All are scoundrels and all are honourable. Innocent, unhappy. Beasts and angels at the same time. Fallen, rebellious angels. One must only understand. ' An all-wise goodness reigns over the world.' *Es herrscht eine allweise Gute uber die Welt.* That's how Schelling put it in German, and in Russian it is ' The Immaculate Mother's shield.' . . . And here she is herself, do you see ? "

Right opposite him there hung on the wall a copy of Raphael's Sistine Madonna—Golitsin glanced at it and

suddenly remembered of whom Márinka's eyes reminded him, when leaning over the banisters she looked at him for the last time as he was going down the stairs after his arrest.

"What eyes!" Odoevsky continued, looking at the Madonna with ecstatic tenderness. "How does it say in the Russian songs: 'Mother—the damp earth'? Russia is a Mother. The Mother of all the Sorrowful. But one must not speak of this. . . . Don't be angry with me, your Excellency. I will tell you everything. You shall know all. I'll just rest and then begin again. Kahovsky shot; Obolensky pricked the horse with the bayonet. And Kühelbeker aimed at the grand-duke, only his pistol did not go off. It's all right, it's all right, put it down, or you will forget. Well, what else? . . . But it's nonsense, though! That's not it again. . . . But when I was freezing in the ditch under the hedge that was just it, the very thing: golden, green cups; when we were children we used to drink milk out of them upstairs in a room with half-circular windows that looked right on to a birch copse; they were green and gold, just like the sunshine through the birch leaves in spring. It was so lovely! And now too. . . . Only don't be angry, my dear, dear ones. Don't let us get angry, and everything will be well. Let us forgive, let us love one another! Let us join hands and sing and dance like children, like God's angels in paradise, in the golden age."

He spoke lower and lower, and was quite silent at last; he closed his eyes as though he were asleep or unconscious. He smiled in his sleep, and quiet tears flowed down his face. Benckendorf kissed him on the head with a tenderness that was perhaps unfeigned.

At the other end of the room a curtain as heavy as the

one behind which Golitsin was listening, moved and parted suddenly and the Tsar came in.

They all surrounded him, speaking in undertones, so as not to wake the invalid. Only separate words reached Golitsin.

"He might get brain fever."

"We ought to bleed him and put some ice on his head."

"Important evidence. . . ."

"Why, but he is raving, it's the words of a madman, he might involve innocent men. . . ."

"Never mind, we shall look into it."

Golitsin did not remember how he got back to his old place behind the screen in the big hall. He sat for a long time in a senseless stupor.

Suddenly he caught sight of Levashov. Sitting at the card-table, he was sorting out some papers. Golitsin jumped up and rushed to him so suddenly that Levashov started, turned round and jumped up too.

"What is it? What is the matter with you, Golitsin?"

"Take me to the Tsar!"

"The Tsar is engaged. If you have to say anything, you can say it to me."

"No, to the Tsar! At once, at once, this minute!"

"Why are you shouting, sir? Have you gone mad?"

"Yes, mad! mad! You have driven one mad already, and here is another! There is torture in Russia! You have tortured him, torture me now! Both together! Draw out our veins, toast our heels! Oh, scoundrels, scoundrels, brutes, torturers!" Golitsin shouted furiously, stamping and raising his fists.

Levashov seized him by the hands, but he wrenched himself free, pushed him away and ran, not knowing

where and with what object. The thought flashed through his mind to kill the Beast, or if not to kill, at least to abuse him, beat him, spit into his face.

"Hold him!" Levashov shouted to the two sentries who were still standing like two statues by the door at the other end of the room. They started, came to life, understood and ran to catch Golitsin.

"Mikulin! Mikulin!" Levashov shouted, looking as frightened as though three men were not a match for one.

"Here, your Excellency," Mikulin, the colonel on duty, seemed to spring out of the ground with five huge guardsmen in bronze helmets and breastplates—a regular army against one unarmed man. The Tsar's face showed itself for a moment somewhere in the distance, but immediately disappeared again.

They surrounded him, pressed him close and caught him. Some one putting his arms round Golitsin from behind squeezed him so tightly that he almost choked; another held him by the throat; a third struck him on the face. But still he did not surrender, and fought desperately with the tenfold strength that fury gives.

Suddenly there was a sound of a distant scream. Golitsin recognized Odoevsky's voice. He never understood, either at the time or afterwards, what had happened: whether the sick man recovered consciousness and was frightened by the noise of the struggle, or they were bleeding him and he imagined he was being tortured, murdered—but, anyway, the scream was terrible. And Golitsin answered it with another scream like it. If anyone from outside had heard it he might have thought that this really was a torture chamber or a madhouse.

"Ropes! Ropes! Bind him! And what is he yelling for, the rascal! Stop his mouth!"

Golitsin felt that a handkerchief was stuffed into his mouth, that his arms and legs were tied, that they were lifting and carrying him.

He submitted, quieted down, closed his eyes. "Well, this will do. It's all right, all is well," said some voice.

The white face of the Beast slowly floated past him in a red mist—and he lost consciousness.

Part Four

I

"THEY are going to torture me. Help me to endure it, O Lord!" was Golitsin's first thought when he came to himself in the fresh air: to bring him to consciousness Shulgin, the chief of the police, put down the window of the carriage as they drove from the palace to the fortress.

"Christian martyrs endured all sorts of torture. . . . But of course they were saints, and I . . . well, perhaps I too . . ." Golitsin tried to comfort himself, but instead of courage he felt animal terror.

The carriage stopped by the commandant's house in the Petropavlovsky fortress. Shulgin helped the prisoner to get out and handed him to a courier. They entered a small room with bare walls, with no other furniture than two chairs and a small table, on which a tallow candle was burning. The courier made Golitsin sit on one of the chairs and himself settled down on the other. He yawned so comfortably, crossing himself and covering his mouth with his hand, that Golitsin suddenly began to think they would not torture him.

"Yes, they will. Here they are! They are coming! God help me!" he thought with that hideous sinking sensation in the stomach which turns one inside out as he listened to the sinister clank of iron and the tread of many feet in the room next door.

An old man with a wooden leg, his grey hair cropped like a soldier's—General Sukin, commandant of the Petropavlovsky fortress, came in, followed by a short, stout old man with a sunken nose, Major Podushkin, and

several adjutants, sergeants and soldiers. Sukin had in his hand iron rods with rings on them. "Instruments of torture," thought Golitsin, and closed his eyes so as not to see. "Help me, Lord," he repeated almost unconscious.

The old man, rapidly tapping the floor with his wooden leg, went up to the table, brought up to the candle a sheet of note-paper and announced :

"His Majesty the Tsar orders me to put you in fetters."

Golitsin listened without understanding. Several men rushed at him and began putting fetters on his wrists and ankles, locking them with keys.

He still did not understand. And then all at once he understood and bit his lip, held his breath so as not to weep with joy, as animal and senseless as his terror of just before. He looked at the commandant's face and thought : "What a splendid man !" The face of the major without a nose seemed to him charming, and the grey faces of the soldiers so kind that he was ready to kiss each one of them. He noticed an orange collar such as he had not seen before on the adjutant's uniform. "They must have changed it because of the new reign," he thought with the same intoxicating senseless joy. He was a little ashamed of having got into such a fright, but even shame was swallowed up by the joy.

"Yegor Mihailovitch, take him to the Alexeyevsky," said the commandant to Podushkin. The latter tied together the ends of a handkerchief and put it over Golitsin's eyes.

Golitsin got up and nearly fell : he did not know how to walk in fetters. They seized him by the arms, led him out and put him in a sledge. Podushkin, sitting beside him, put an arm round his waist. The sledge often turned round, probably in the narrow alleys between

the bastions of the fortress. Glancing with one eye from under the bandage that had slipped on one side, Golitsin saw a drawbridge over a ditch and a gateway in a thick stone wall.

"Where are you taking me? Is it to the Alexeyevsky ravelin?" he asked Podushkin.

"Don't you trouble, you will have fine quarters," said Podushkin reassuringly, and straightened the handkerchief over his eyes.

Golitsin remembered what he had heard about the ravelin: only those who were "forgotten" were put there and no one ever came out of it. But in comparison with torture, imprisonment for life seemed bliss to him.

The sledge stopped. The prisoner was again taken by the arms, helped to get out and led up the steps. The doors creaked on their rusty hinges and shut after him with a heavy boom. "All hope abandon, ye who enter here," came into Golitsin's mind.

The handkerchief was removed from his eyes and he was taken into a narrow corridor with a number of doors dimly lighted with tallow night-lights. The major walked in front and, stopping at every door, asked: "Engaged?" The answer was "Engaged." At last came the answer "Vacant."

"Come in, please," said Podushkin amiably, and Golitsin entered a long and narrow stone crevice that looked like a coffin. The warder lighted a night-light—a jar of green glass with a wick floating in oil. Golitsin saw a low vault, a window with thick iron bars in a deep niche in the wall, two chairs, a small table, an iron bedstead, a round iron stove in one corner and an evil-smelling bucket—"*parashka*"—in another.

They took off his irons, undressed him, searched him,

feeling even under the arms, put on him a convict's jacket and trousers, a dirty loose coat, and torn slippers much too big for him.

A gaunt old man, wearing a long-skirted green military coat with red collar and cuffs, dating back to the times of Paul, came into the room ; extremely thin, pale and tall, he looked like a corpse. He was the commandant of the Alexeyevsky ravelin—Lilien Ankern, a Swede. The warders thought him a little mad and were positive that he was about a hundred and had spent some fifty years in the ravelin, imprisoned for ever among the prisoners.

Bending forward, with his hands behind his back, two yellow teeth showing in his open mouth, he walked with an even step and unseeing eyes right up to Golitsin.

" How are you ? " he asked while still at a distance ; without waiting for an answer he knelt down and with a habitually clever movement put on Golitsin's feet the irons that had been taken off. Then he showed him how one must walk in them, holding by a string the chains that joined the rings round the ankles. Golitsin tried and nearly fell down again.

" Never mind, you'll learn," Major Podushkin reassured him.

Wrapping a piece of wash-leather round the manacles, the commandant asked :

" Can you write like this ? "

" Yes."

" Well, the toilet is done," said Podushkin with an amiable grin. And Lilien Ankern, still on his knees, raised to the prisoner his dim old eyes that seemed covered with a membrane like the eyes of sleeping birds and uttered reverently, as though it were a prayer :

" God's mercy will save us all ! "

"This is how the old dead must welcome the new in the other world," thought Golitsin.

The old man got up in silence and with his back bent and his arms clasped behind him, went out of the cell with the same even tread.

The warders helped the prisoner to move from the chair to the bed.

"Sleep in peace, don't worry : everything will pass. This is a splendid cell, warm and dry," said Podushkin.

They all went out and locked the door. The key turned in the lock, there was a rattle of bolts and latches, the last huge bolt shut with a grinding sound and then there was stillness.

Golitsin felt as though he were buried alive, and yet he rejoiced : he had escaped torture.

He saw a piece of rye-bread and a mug of kvass on the table. While he was being searched he asked for something to eat ; Podushkin apologized that it was too late and that every one in the kitchen was asleep, and ordered some bread and kvass to be brought. Golitsin ate and drank it all ; he had not had such a good supper for a long time.

He began settling for the night. He took off the coat and had some difficulty in raising on to the bed his feet weighed down by the shackles ; he was on the point of stretching himself out on the mattress, thin as a pancake, when he noticed that the coarse pillow without a pillow-case had spots of grease on it. He sniffed it, disgusted. Márinka's handkerchief, not yet unfolded, with letters "M. T." embroidered in red, lay on the table. She must have succeeded in shoving it into his pocket when she was saying good-bye, and during the search they either overlooked it or left it, taking pity on him.

He spread it out so that his cheek should not touch the pillow. The handkerchief smelt of Márinka. He smiled, remembering for some reason how on their first and last wedding-night when she woke him with a kiss, he had not managed to keep her but dropped " stupidly " asleep.

Somewhere quite close, it might have been by his very ear, a clock, like a copper-voiced angel, chimed a mournful tune. " God's mercy will save us all,"—he seemed to hear the greeting of the dead to the dead. And still smiling he fell into a blissful sleep. His last thought was : " In the jaws of the Beast as in Christ's bosom."

The same sounds as in the evening, only in the reverse order—first the grinding of the big bolt, then the rattle of bolts and latches, and finally the sound of the key turning in the lock, woke him in the morning. Lilien Ankern came in, asked " How are you ? " and disappeared without waiting for an answer.

Shibaev, a gunner with a young cheerful face, brought some weak tea in a huge pewter tea-pot and two lumps of sugar. Out of politeness he held the sugar not in his bare hand, but in the fold of his coat ; putting everything on the table, he bowed civilly.

" What is the time ? " asked Golitsin.

Shibaev smiled without speaking, and went out with a polite bow.

A wretched-looking veteran took out the bucket and began sweeping the floor with a broom.

" What time is it ? " asked Golitsin.

The soldier made no answer.

" What sort of day is it ? "

" I do not know, sir."

To keep warm Golitsin wrapped himself up in the

blanket and drank tea. He looked round his "dry" cell : on the worn stucco of the walls a blue ridge of fresh paint indicated the level of the water during the last inundation, and damp patches stood out ; the vault and the stove chimney were covered with moisture ; the air was saturated with a stuffy, as it were subterranean, dampness. And when the stove in the passage was lit, the iron tube, almost over the prisoner's head, grew burning hot and crackled. His head was hot while his feet were as cold as before.

The walls continuing the low vault curved to the very floor, so that one could stand upright only in the middle of the cell, and at the sides one had to bend. The vault, covered with cobwebs, swarmed with spiders, beetles, centipedes, and some other strange creatures which only half appeared through the cracks. "Better not look too closely," thought Golitsin and as he lowered his eyes he saw something roll across the floor : it was a huge brown water-rat.

The window was thickly smeared with chalk so that even on sunny days there was a perpetual twilight in the cell. A window—"an eye"—was cut in the door ; it had an iron grating on the inner side and a dark green curtain on the outer. The sentry walking up and down noiselessly in his felt boots along the passage covered with felt mats, lifted the curtain from time to time and peeped into the cell. As soon as the prisoner moved or coughed the watching eye appeared.

There were drawings and inscriptions on the walls, for the most part half effaced—the gaolers had probably orders to erase them—the former prisoners' annals from beyond the grave.

Under a man's portrait was written : "Brother, I have decided to commit suicide." Under a woman's :

"Good-bye for ever, *maman*." And then by the side of it the words of our Lord: "I was in prison and you visited me."

The door opened, and a priest came in; he was wearing a luxuriously-rustling silk cassock, a cross round his neck, and an order of merit.

"Have I the honour of seeing Prince Valeryan Mihailovitch Golitsin?" he asked in the doorway, with a ceremonious bow. "I hope I don't disturb you?"

"Please come in, Father."

"Allow me to introduce myself—Father Pyotr Myslovsky, chief priest of the Kazansky Cathedral, the spiritual father of the prisoners and, I venture to say, their friend—of which I boast, for it is no sin to boast of the friendship of worthy men."

"He is a spy, he is trying to get round me," thought Golitsin and looked at him carefully. The priest was a man of enormous height and athletic build, of stately and agreeable appearance; his magnificent red beard was streaked with grey;—peasants about fifty sometimes look like that; and his face, too, was a peasant face, crude but kind and intelligent; the triangular chinks of his eyes, covered at the sides with overhanging eyelids, had the expression so common to Russians of simplicity and cunning.

"Well, and when is the execution?" asked Golitsin, looking straight at him.

"What execution? Whose?"

"Mine. And what it is to be, you ought to know best: am I going to be shot, hanged, or beheaded?"

"What are you saying, prince, God bless you!" Father Pyotr threw up his hands. "By my priest's cross here I swear—though one shouldn't swear—no one is

thinking about executions. Why, don't you know that capital punishment has been abolished in Russia ? "

Golitsin did not believe him yet, but just as on the day before, when he had escaped torture, his heart stood still with joy.

" There is no capital punishment, but there is torture ? " he said, still looking straight at him.

" Torture—in the nineteenth century, in a Christian country, after the golden days of Alexander ! " Father Pyotr shook his head. " Ah, gentlemen, what bad thoughts you have ; excuse me, I'll say frankly, unworthy, ignoble thoughts ! It is all meant for your own good, and you torment yourselves and others. You don't wish to understand who it is you have to deal with. If you only knew the unutterable mercy of the monarch. . . ."

" I'll tell you what, Father," Golitsin interrupted him. " Remember once for all : I do not want the Tsar's mercies, I would rather choose the gallows or the scaffold. So don't trouble yourself. You will get nothing from me. Do you understand ? "

" I do. How could I help understanding ? ' Priest, go away, you are worse than a dog to me.' Why, you wouldn't drive a dog away like this. . . ."

His voice trembled, his eyes blinked, his lips twitched, and he covered his face with his hands.

" Such a sturdy peasant, and so touchy ! " Golitsin was surprised.

" You misunderstood me, Father Pyotr. I did not mean to offend you."

" Eh, your Excellency, what's the good of counting offences ! " Father Pyotr uncovered his face and sighed. " Some people let off their anger on anyone who happens to be near, and feel the better for it—well, let them ! I am not a fool, I understand : a priest comes to the

prisoner—from whom? From the authorities—so he is a spy, a scoundrel. But this is the first time you have seen me, sir. I have served for fifteen years in the prison, in this hell; I struggle like a fish out of water. And what do you suppose I do it for? Do you think it's for the sake of this rubbish?" He pointed to his order of merit. "You might shower promotions and decorations on me, I would not stay at this disgusting job for a single day if I did not hope to do good, however small, to help those whom no one else will help. If it were not for me, an unworthy priest, there would be no one here to intercede for you. . . . And I am particularly concerned about the affair of the Fourteenth."

"Why so?"

"Because I am one of your sort myself." Father Pyotr screwed up his eyes, and whispered in his ear: "Though I am a simple peasant, I have a clear head and a sound heart. And as I look at the state of things here, the spirit of revolt consumes me like fire, I suffer agonies—I ought to go away from sin, but I cannot. It is high time I got used to it; but whenever I see a prisoner, especially in such iron bracelets as yours, I simply boil over with anger and indignation: to see man, God's creature born for liberty, in fetters—is revolting, unbearable!"

Golitsin was more and more surprised. "I have wronged you, Father Pyotr, forgive me," he said, and stretched out his hand to him.

Myslovsky pressed it warmly and suddenly he blushed, blinked, gave a sob and fell on Golitsin's neck.

"Dear good Valeryan Mihailovitch, don't drive me away: I, too, may come in useful for something; you will see yourself," and he kissed and hugged Golitsin tenderly.

"By the way, is it long since you went to confession

and holy communion, my friend?" he added rather inappropriately, though it seemed to Golitsin this was the chief object of his visit.

"Yes, it is," Golitsin answered reluctantly.

"Perhaps you would like to now?"

"No, I wouldn't."

"According to Russian law the priest is obliged to report evil designs upon members of the Imperial family revealed to him at confession," came to Golitsin's mind.

Father Pyotr seemed on the point of asking something else, but checked himself and looked down. Then he got up hurriedly.

"I am going to your neighbour, Prince Obolensky, he is just on the other side of this wall. You are friends, aren't you?"

"Yes, we are."

"Shall I give him your greetings?"

"Do."

Golitsin did not like it that Father Pyotr so lightly told him what the prisoners are not supposed to know; it was as though they were already in a conspiracy.

"Oh, I was almost forgetting." Father Pyotr put his hand in his pocket and pulled out an old leather case.

"My spectacles!" Golitsin cried joyfully. "How did you get them?"

"From Foma Fomitch Fryndin."

"But they will take them from me. I have had one pair taken away already."

"No, they won't: I have obtained permission for you to keep them."

Golitsin did not like this either: the priest was too ready with his services, too certain that he would accept them, though unable to repay.

"Foma Fomitch asked me to tell you that the Princess Marya Pavlovna is well; she firmly trusts in God's mercy, and wants you to do the same. . . . You cannot write to each other as yet—it is strictly forbidden; but later on you will be able to, through me," he whispered in Golitsin's ear, looking round at the door. "Everything will arrange itself, your Excellency; people can live even in prison. Only don't get depressed, don't lose courage. Well, God keep you!" He raised his hand to bless, but changed his mind, embraced him once more, and went out.

Golitsin already believed or almost believed that there would be no torture or execution; he was glad, but the cloudless, clear joy of the day before—in the jaws of the Beast as in Christ's bosom—was dimmed, seemed sullied. He realized that there might be something more terrible than torture and death. Father Pyotr might be a good and simple priest, but for him, Golitsin, he was more dangerous than all the spies and detectives in the world.

The gunner, Shibaev, brought him his dinner—cabbage soup and porridge. The oil mixed into the porridge smelt so badly that Golitsin could not swallow a spoonful, and put it out of his mouth. Neither knives nor forks were provided, only a wooden spoon. "Nothing sharp so that one could not cut one's throat," he guessed.

After dinner, Adjutant Trussov, a young man with a handsome and impudent face, brought him a pouch of tobacco and a beautiful pipe covered with beads.

"Would you like to smoke?"

"Thank you, I don't smoke."

"Why, isn't this your pipe?"

"No, it isn't."

"Oh, I am sorry," said Trussov, with a smirk which made his face still more impudent; he made a polite bow and went out.

"Tempting with tobacco after tempting with the Lord's Body and Blood," thought Golitsin with disgust.

When it grew dark and the night-light was lighted, the beetles swarming on the walls could be heard rustling in the stillness.

The top pane of the window was not chalked; through it a dark streak of the sky was visible and a star twinkled.

Golitsin remembered Márinka. Afraid of being overcome by his feelings, he began thinking of how to communicate with Obolensky.

He sat down on the bed, knocked with his finger on the wall and put his ear to listen, but there was no answer. The wall was so thick that knocking with the finger was not heard. Then he succeeded in knocking with the iron bolt of his handcuff, and when he heard an answering knock he was so delighted that he knocked loudly, clattering his chains.

Sergeant Nichiporenko, with a red drunken face, came in.

"What are you up to, you son of a bitch? Do you want to be put in a sack?"

"What sack?" Golitsin asked curiously, not offended but merely surprised at the abuse.

"You'll see when they put you in one," the man answered in a grumbling voice and going out of the cell added so convincingly that Golitsin understood it was not a joke, "Or you will get flogged."

Golitsin lay down on the bed with his face to the wall, pretending to sleep, waited till everything was quiet and again began knocking with his finger on the wall. Obolensky replied.

At first they knocked endlessly, eagerly, insatiably, merely to hear an answer. Their souls struggled towards each other through stone, their hearts were beating together. "You?"—"I"—"You?"—"I." Sometimes the blood in his ears thumped so loudly from joy that he could not hear the answer, and feared there would be none. But there was. Golitsin dropped asleep in the middle of knocking, and dreamt of it all night long.

The days were so alike that he lost count of them. He made little balls of bread and stuck them on the wall: each ball meant a day.

He was seldom bored: there were so many little things to do. He was learning to walk in fetters. He turned round and round in the narrow space like a beast in a cage, holding on to the back of a chair so as not to fall.

Márinka's handkerchief still served him for a pillow-case. He was sorry to soil it. He practised blowing his nose with his fingers; at first it disgusted him, but he got used to it. He noticed that in the morning his nose and mouth were black inside; the night-light smoked, for the wick was too thick. He pulled it out and divided it into shreds; the smoking ceased and the air remained pure.

He continued knocking to Obolensky, but they could not understand each other, could not invent an alphabet.

There was a metal ventilating fan in Golitsin's window; he broke off one of its blades, sharpened it on a brick in the wall, and with this semblance of knife, cut a splinter off the foot of the bed. He took some soot off the lamp-wick, dissolved it in water in a little crevice on the window-sill, dipped the splinter in this and wrote an alphabet on the wall; each letter was in a square and

by the side of each was marked the number of knocks. And on the paper with which the torn bottom of his spectacle case was lined, he wrote the same alphabet for Obolensky.

Each morning the grubby little veteran brought him a pewter mug of water and an earthenware basin to wash in. Golitsin could not wash himself : the handcuffs were in the way. The soldier soaped his hands, one after the other, and poured water over them.

Golitsin never spoke to the soldier, who was so silent that he seemed a deaf mute. But once he spoke of his own accord :

" Come nearer to the stove, your honour, it's warmer there," he said in a whisper. He brought the basin and mug into the far corner by the stove where the sentry's eye did not reach, and looked at Golitsin long and piteously.

" It's wretched in prison, isn't it ? But there's nothing for it, it is evidently God's will. You must bear it, your honour. God likes patience, and then maybe He will have pity on you."

Golitsin looked at the soldier : a dull, broad face, grey like the cloth of his coat, and such kindness in the small purblind eyes that he was surprised at not having noticed it before.

He pulled out of his pocket the scrap of paper with the alphabet.

" Can you give this to Obolensky ? "

" I daresay I can."

Golitsin had hardly time to thrust the paper into his hand when Major Podushkin and Sergeant Nichiporenko came in. They examined the stove—the chimney was smoking again—and went out without noticing anything.

"They nearly caught us," whispered Golitsin, pale with fear.

"God saved us," the soldier answered simply.

"Would you have caught it badly?"

"Yes, we get 'the sticks' for that."

"I'll get you into trouble; better not do it, give the paper back to me."

"Don't you worry, your honour, I'll take it right enough."

Golitsin felt that he could not thank him.

"What is your name?"

The soldier looked at him long and piteously.

"I am a dead man, your honour." He smiled a quiet, as it were a really dead, smile.

Golitsin felt like weeping. For the first time in his life he seemed to have understood the parable of the Good Samaritan—the answer to the question, "Who is my neighbour?"

That very night he carried on a conversation with Obolensky.

"How are you?" asked Obolensky.

"I am well, but in chains."

"I am weeping."

"Don't weep, all is well," answered Golitsin, and wept with happiness.

II

COMMANDANT SUKIN brought Golitsin a sealed envelope with a list of questions, pen, paper and ink.

"Don't be in a hurry, think it over," he said, giving him the envelope.

Late in the evening Adjutant Trussov came in and put on the table a plate with a nicely browned loaf of white "fancy" bread.

"Help yourself."

"Thank you, I am not hungry."

"Never mind, I'll leave it, you will be hungry later."

"Take it away," said Golitsin resolutely, remembering the temptation with the tobacco.

"You'll offend me, prince. I assure you, I have brought it in all sincerity. I beg you to eat it. Or there may be trouble. . . ."

"What trouble?" asked Golitsin in surprise. But Trussov did not answer, he only grinned; his insinuatingly-impudent pretty face seemed to Golitsin particularly repulsive at that moment. He bowed and went out, leaving the loaf on the table.

Golitsin and Obolensky talked by knocking till late at night.

"I have decided not to answer any questions," said Golitsin.

"You cannot do that, you will damage others as well as yourself," answered Obolensky. "One must answer cunningly, tell lies."

"I can't. Can you?"

"I am learning."

"Ryleyev gives every one away, the scoundrel."

"No, he is not a scoundrel. You don't know him. Have you been examined together?"

"No."

"You will be. You will see: he is better than all of us."

"I don't understand."

"You will. If they question you about Kahovsky, don't tell that he killed Miloradovitch. I, too, wounded him with a bayonet; perhaps it was I killed him and not Kahovsky."

"Why do you say what isn't true? You know it was he."

"Never mind, don't give him away. Save him."

"Save him and ruin you?"

"You won't ruin me: every one is for me and against him."

"I don't want to tell lies."

"You keep thinking of yourself—think of others. They are coming. Good-bye."

After the conversation with Obolensky, Golitsin was so lost in thought that he did not notice how, getting hungry, he had started on the bread. He realized what he was doing only when he had half eaten it. It was not worth while leaving it, so he ate it all.

He woke up at night with pain in the stomach. He suffered with it all night, sighing and groaning. Towards morning he was sick, so sick that he thought he would die. But then he felt better and dropped asleep.

"How did you sleep?" Sukin woke him up.

"Very badly. I was sick."

"Had you eaten anything?"

"Trussov brought me some white bread."

"Did you drink water after it?"

"No."

"Well, that's it then. You must always drink water after eating bread. Never mind, you will soon be better. The doctor will come directly."

"I don't want him."

"Yes, you do. God forbid anything should happen to you. It's very strict here: we answer with our heads for the prisoner's life."

Golitsin was put on the hospital diet—tea and clear soup. But he ate nothing except bread which his friend the veteran brought him secretly.

This went on two days and on the third Podushkin came to see him. He sat down on the bed by Golitsin's side, yawned, made the sign of the cross over his mouth and began :

" Why don't you eat anything ? "

" I am not hungry."

" Come, you had better eat—or you will be forced to."

" How ? "

" Why, they'll thrust a tube into your mouth and pour some soup in—you will have to swallow it then. Or you may be put in the ' sack.' "

" What sack ? "

" There are such cells underground ; on the top there is a stone slab with a hole for air. That's a very different thing from this cell—it's dark, damp, unpleasant."

Remembering the tube and the sack, Golitsin began to eat.

He was still unwell after the night attack. The doctor's assistant, Zatrapezny, used to visit him. He was a drunkard and a reprobate, but honest, sensible, and as he himself said, " a desperate Jacobin." Golitsin learned from him what was going on in the fortress.

Colonel Pestel, recently arrested in the Southern Army, was found to have poison in his possession. He wanted to poison himself so as to escape torture. Sub-lieutenant Zaikin tried to kill himself by banging his head on the wall ; he knew where the *Russkaya Pravda* was buried and was also afraid of torture.

Lieutenant-Colonel Falenberg, who was hardly mixed up in anything, believing that if he made a confession he would be forgiven and immediately set free, falsely accused himself of having contemplated tsaricide,

and when he was imprisoned in the fortress, went mad.

Midshipman Divov, a boy of nineteen—"The Baby" as the gaolers called him,—said that every night he dreamt one and the same dream, that he was stabbing the Tsar with a dagger. He heard voices, had visions—he told of that too; and from such evidence men were seized and put into the fortress.

Lieutenant Annenkov hanged himself on a towel, fell down and was picked up senseless on the floor of his cell.

Cornet Svistunov swallowed the fragments of the broken night-light jar.

Colonel Bulatov believed in the Tsar's mercy as in God's, and when he saw he had been deceived, decided to starve himself to death. The most tempting food and drink were placed before him, but he touched nothing and only bit his fingers and sucked the blood out of them to assuage his thirst. He suffered for twelve days: they probably fed him forcibly. But strictly as he was watched, he managed to outwit his warders and smashed his head against the wall.

"And what will happen to me?" thought Golitsin as he listened to these stories.

He had not yet answered the questions. At first he decided to tell nothing and deny everything. But the more he thought about it, the more he felt that he could not remain silent. There was no getting away from the fact that by his silence he ruined others as well as himself.

Father Myslovsky came to see him almost every day, but only for a minute. He would come in, talk a little, pause as though waiting for something and go out, disappointed.

"What do you think, Father Pyotr, am I doing right in not giving any evidence?" Golitsin asked him one day.

"My dear Valeryan Mihailovitch," cried Myslovsky, overjoyed; he had evidently been waiting for this question. "How can it be right? It is wrong, quite wrong, unwise, and, to be frank, it even isn't honourable. You are ruining . . ."

"I know, I know! Ruining not only myself but other people too. . . . Ah, Father Pyotr, you, too, are against me! I didn't expect it of you!"

"My friend, act as your conscience tells you, as God moves you!" cried Father Pyotr, throwing himself on his neck.

On the same day Golitsin sent his answer to the Committee. He confirmed everything of which he himself was accused, but about other questions said he knew nothing. He sent it off in the morning and in the evening his friend the soldier brought him a note from Kahovsky.

"Golitsin, my fate is in your hands. That scoundrel Ryleyev gives every one away. If you and he are brought together and he asks you to confirm that I killed Miloradovitch, don't give me away. All are scoundrels except you."

After receiving this note Golitsin did not sleep the whole night, tormented by the thought of what he ought to do. He decided nothing, feeling that the thing would decide itself.

In the morning he wrote to the Committee asking them to return the list of questions. They did, and he began writing new answers. He followed Obolensky's advice; answered fully each question, trying not to damage anyone, not to drag in any names, and in order to do

so he lied, prevaricated, and tried every dodge and evasion he could think of.

He was writing till late at night and went to bed when he had finished. The written pages on the table showed white in the dim light of the night-light. And every time he glanced at them he was seized with such disgust that he wanted to tear them to pieces. But he did not. He turned to the wall so as not to see them, and at last dropped asleep.

Next day he sent the new answers to the Committee, and two days later Sukin congratulated him on the Tsar's first favour—removal of the shackles. The second favour was a parcel from home : linen, his favourite old dressing gown and an unsealed note from Márinka.

" My dear, I am well and as comfortable as it is possible to be in my position. You, too, must take care of yourself ; for God's sake don't give way to despair. Don't think that I can exist without you. Death alone will sever our bond. I shall be where you are. Remember what I told you : my life hangs on yours like a thread on a needle ; where the needle goes, the thread follows. God and the Mother Immaculate keep you. Yours for ever, Princess Marya Golitsin."

Two days later he was taken to be cross-examined by the Committee.

" Ryleyev's evidence differs from yours on certain points. You will be brought together," said General Tchernyshov and rang the bell. Ryleyev was brought in under escort.

" Do you confirm, Golitsin, that on the eve of the Fourteenth Ryleyev gave Kahovsky a dagger, saying ' Kill the Tsar ' ? "

" Yes, I do."

" And what do you say, Ryleyev ? "

"I have already told your Excellency that I agree beforehand with everything Golitsin may say. I don't remember exactly what I did say then, but if he remembers, no doubt it was so. Do you remember, Golitsin?"

"Yes, Ryleyev," said Golitsin, raising his eyes to him.

Just as in the Hermitage that time, it was he and not he. But now Golitsin felt no contempt or indignation, nothing but infinite pity: what had they done to him? He looked thin and worn as after a dangerous illness or torture. But the most terrible thing about him was the cloudless peace and serenity of his face, such as one finds among the dead. "You don't know him, he is better than all of us."

"And so, Ryleyev, you incited Kahovsky?"

"Incited him? No. He decided it of himself, and I knew it. But perhaps he would not have done anything if it had not been for me. I am more to blame than he is," Ryleyev answered, and added after a pause:

"Your Excellency, I conceal neither my words nor actions nor even my most secret thoughts. I have often thought that for the stability of the new order it was necessary to exterminate all the members of the Imperial family. But so far as I remember, I have not spoken of this to anyone, and at last I reverted to my original idea, that the Great Assembly alone would have the right to decide the fate of the Imperial Family. And I earnestly beg the Committee not to ascribe it to my obduracy that I have not said all this before. If I concealed anything, it was in order to spare others rather than myself. I candidly admit that I am chiefly, perhaps solely, responsible for the Fourteenth, for had I refused from the outset to take part, no one would have

begun. In short, if for the good of Russia some one must pay the penalty of death, I alone deserve it, and I pray to God it will all end with me."

"Kahovsky says that Count Miloradovitch was killed by Obolensky, who wounded him with a bayonet," Tchernyshov continued. "Do you confirm, Ryleyev, that it was not Obolensky but Kahovsky who killed him, as he said himself at your flat on the evening of the Fourteenth?"

"Yes, I confirm it," said Ryleyev.

"Do you confirm it, Golitsin?"

Golitsin knew that by his answer he would ruin one or the other—Kahovsky or Obolensky. Which was he to choose?

"Well, why are you silent again?" Tchernyshov looked at him with a sneer; he thought he had caught him this time—he would have to speak.

"I implore you, Golitsin, answer!" said Ryleyev. "Obolensky's fate is in your hands. Save an innocent man!"

"I confirm it," said Golitsin.

"Did you see it with your own eyes?" asked Tchernyshov.

"I did," Golitsin brought out, feeling as though he were pronouncing Kahovsky's death sentence.

Tchernyshov rang again and said:

"Bring Kahovsky."

Kahovsky came in. He was the same as ever: a heavy face as though made of stone, with a haughtily protruding lower lip and eyes as piteous as the eyes of a sick child or of a dog that has lost its master, with the unseeing stare of a sleep-walker.

Golitsin was taken to the next room and put in a corner behind the screen. The prison doctor and his

assistant were in the room. Golitsin learnt later that they sat there all the time the Committee was at work : the prisoners were sometimes brought out unconscious, and they bled them.

At first the voices behind the door were indistinct, but afterwards, when the door was slightly opened, they became audible.

" So you lied, Kahovsky, you slandered an innocent man ? "

" Slandered ? I ? I might be a criminal in a frenzy, but no one will make me a scoundrel and a slanderer. Being themselves guilty, they dare to insult me by calling me a murderer. They kissed me, blessed me, and now they despise me as a criminal. Well, I don't care ! Let them say what they like against me, I won't justify myself. This man . . ."

Golitsin understood that " this man " was Ryleyev. Kahovsky so hated him that he did not want to call him by name.

" This man cannot insult me. It seems to me he insults himself more. I'll say one thing : I do not recognize him or perhaps I never really knew him. . . ."

" You never answered the main question : Who killed Count Miloradovitch ? "

" I have already had the honour to explain to your Excellency that I did shoot at Count Miloradovitch, but not I alone : the whole front of the column did the same, and Prince Obolensky wounded him with a bayonet. I do not know whether I killed him or somebody else. Nothing and no one can force me to say anything different. Please do not ask me any more, I will not answer."

" You had better confess, Kahovsky. Every one says you did it."

"Who are the 'every one'?"

"Ryleyev, Bestuzhev, Odoevsky, Pushchin, Golitsin. . ."

"Golitsin? Impossible . . ."

"Would you like him to be brought in?"

"No, I would rather not . . ."

He stopped suddenly.

"Excuse me, your Excellency," he began again, and tears trembled in his voice, "it's a momentary weakness, childishness. . . . One ought to laugh and not to cry. 'All is for the best in this best of all possible worlds,' as the noseless philosopher puts it. The last blow has been dealt, the last tie has been severed. It is finished, finished, finished! Alone I have lived, alone will I die!"

"And so you confirm that you killed Count Miloradovitch?"

"I confirm, I confirm, I sign it with both hands. I killed Count Miloradovitch. And had the Tsar ridden up to our ranks I would have killed him too. And every one, every one—I had intended and agreed to exterminate all the members of the Imperial family. . . . Well, gentlemen, what more do you wish? Execute me, do what you like to me. I ask for one favour only—sentence me as soon as possible. I am not afraid of death and I will die as one ought."

"We shall die together, Kahovsky! You are not alone, remember—together!" cried Ryleyev, and there was such entreaty in his voice that Golitsin's heart stood still: would Kahovsky understand, would he respond?

"What is he saying? What is he saying? Please spare me this, your Excellency. . . . It's sickening to hear him."

" There, Kahovsky, don't get excited," said Tchernyshov, taking him by the hand.

Podushkin peeped out from behind the door, Golitsin too.

" Don't be alarmed, I won't touch him, I don't want to soil my hands," answered Kahovsky, and suddenly he turned to Ryleyev as though he had only just seen him. " Well, what is it ? "

Ryleyev raised his eyes to him with a smile.

" I want to say, Kahovsky, that I have always . . ."

" What ? What ? What ? " Kahovsky stepped up to him, clenching his fists.

" Hi, men ! " shouted Tchernyshov.

Podushkin and the escort ran in.

" Loved you," Ryleyev concluded.

" Loved me ! Here is something for your love ! " cried Kahovsky, rushing at Ryleyev. There was a sound of a blow.

Golitsin cried out and staggered as though he himself had been struck. Somebody supported him, made him sit down. He fainted.

When he came to himself, the doctor's assistant, Zatrapezny, was holding a glass of water to his lips. His teeth chattered against the glass, and it took him a long time to catch hold of the edge ; he succeeded at last, drank the water and asked :

" What has he done to him ? Killed him ? "

" Killed him indeed ! He has only given the scoundrel a punch in the face," answered Zatrapezny.

And again, as though he himself had been struck, Golitsin felt his cheek burning with the blow, and, gloating over the shame and the pain, he thought :

" Serves you right, you scoundrel ! "

III

"WELL, thank heaven, you have answered and that's the end of it," said Father Pyotr to Golitsin when he called at his cell the next day. "Now it will all go smoothly. You may be sure he will spare you all. He says, 'I'll surprise Russia and Europe!' The Tsar has read your answers," he added with a mysterious air after a pause. "His Majesty has drawn from it a very favourable conclusion as to your abilities. . . ."

"That will do, Father Pyotr, go away," said Golitsin, turning pale.

Father Pyotr did not understand, and looked at him in surprise.

"Go away!" Golitsin repeated, turning still paler. "I have followed your advice. What more do you want?"

"But what's the matter, what's the matter with you, Valeryan Mihailovitch dear? Why are you angry with me?"

"Because you, a servitor of Christ, were not ashamed to undertake the duties of a contemptible spy and informer!"

"God be your judge, prince. You are insulting a man who wishes you nothing but good. . . ."

"Get out! Get out!" shouted Golitsin, jumping up and stamping.

Father Pyotr went away and did not come again. Golitsin knew that if he would only say one word, the priest would run to him at once. But he did not want to call him, and tried to convince himself that he did not need him and had always disliked that "sentimental rogue."

Not Father Pyotr alone but every one had forsaken him.

"They've left me alone at last." He was pleased at first, but when he felt that solitude had closed over him like water over a man who drowns, he was frightened.

The worst of it was that Obolensky was transferred to another cell. They could not knock to each other any more. With the new neighbour everything would have to begin afresh. Odoevsky was put in Obolensky's place. When Golitsin knocked, he answered by such frantic clatter that the sentries rushed to him. And every time that Golitsin attempted to knock, the same thing happened. At last he gave it up in despair. On the other side of him was Falenberg, who was also mad, and did not answer the knocks at all. He was longing for his wife and weeping about her. At night, when everything was still, Golitsin could hear his sobs, subdued at first, then growing louder and louder, and ending with a heartrending wail :

"Eudoxie ! Eudoxie !"

Golitsin wanted to answer with another wail—"Márinka ! Márinka !"

The first days of his confinement, when he thought the end was near, were easy. But now when he became convinced that the end might not come for months and years, hopeless misery overwhelmed him.

One day followed another, so monotonous, that as in the unconsciousness of delirium, they seemed merged into one endless day. He swept off the wall the balls of bread by which he counted the days : he had lost count of time. Time became eternity, and he peeped with horror into its yawning abyss.

His mind was being destroyed, crushed like the grain between two millstones—two thoughts : one must do something and there is nothing to do.

For hours on end he sat at the table making stars,

crosses, circles, polygons out of the metal splinters he had broken off the ventilator.

Or, sitting on the bed, he pulled out the endless thread by which the sheet was tacked to the blanket and tied knots, one at the top of another, till a ball was formed ; then he untied them and started over again.

Or he watched the spider making its web and envied it : it was working—it could not be bored.

Or, standing on the window-sill, he looked through the hole in the ventilator at the granite wall opposite, and the roof of the bastion with a gutter where a crow he knew used to perch sometimes, cawing.

Or he circled round and round his cell, making still deeper the holes in the brick floor, worn by the feet of the former inhabitants.

Or he composed idiotic verses and repeated them senselessly to stupefaction.

In the corner where he washed there was an inscription on the wall : *God demn your ayes.*

" Who wrote this ? " he asked the veteran.

" An Englishman."

" What became of him ? "

" He died."

" What of ? "

" Of sleeping. He slept day and night and in sleep he died."

" I, too, shall die in sleep," thought Golitsin.

He became tearful like a woman. When the clock chimed its melancholy funereal chime, he wanted to cry. When the gunner, Shibaev, brought him tea or dinner with a particularly friendly smile, tears came into his eyes. Once he read over Márinka's note and wept like a child. And when the sentry looked through the " peep-hole," he felt ashamed, turned his back to him,

tried to stop crying and could not—the tears flowed on, uncontrollable, disgustingly sweet. "This is what prison has done in two or three weeks, and what will happen later?" He thought:

"For Russia's sake I go to death,
I know it and I feel it,
And, holy father, joyfully
My portion I shall bless."

But when it got to the point he was frightened, he grew weak, he did not want to die; he loved life because he loved Márinka. Love was base: in order to die as one should, one ought to cease to love, to kill love; of all his terrible thoughts this one was the most terrible.

Each day his anguish increased, his patience was more and more exhausted; his heart seemed eaten away by pain, his thoughts were muddled, he fancied he was going mad. He watched himself and discovered symptoms of madness in his every movement, every word, every thought. At first he was afraid of madness and afterwards afraid of this fear. He was being driven mad by the thought that he would go mad. "If only the end would come soon," he thought in despair. Or he examined the sharpened blade of the ventilator, wondering if he could cut his throat with it.

At last he fell ill. He became feverish, had shooting pains in his side and began to spit blood. Commandant Sukin was alarmed and sent for the doctor, who declared that if the invalid were not moved into a better cell he might develop consumption.

Golitsin was glad. All his sufferings were at an end: death was liberty.

Hearing that he was ill, Father Pyotr came to him at

once, and when Golitsin began to apologize for having insulted him at their last meeting, the priest did not let him finish, embraced him and wept.

IV

THE fortress officials had orders to take care that none of the prisoners should die before the end of the trial. Golitsin was well looked after : his hard bed was changed for a soft one, he was better fed, was allowed books ; his handcuffs were removed, and at last he was transferred to a better cell. But he missed the old, dark and narrow one, the depressions made by the feet in the brick floor, his friend the spider, and the stains of damp on the walls which to him were not stains but faces and pictures.

At the beginning of April he began to recover. When he felt that he was not going to die, he tried to be grieved and could not. Let there be months, years, tens of years in prison, let there be new unknown agonies—if only it were life !

The window of his new cell faced south. There was a moat below and the walls of the bastion receded so that more of the sky could be seen than from his old cell, and in spite of the embrasure of the window being almost five feet deep, at the beginning of April the sun began to peep in, making an acute angle of light on the white wall with the black shadow of the railings.

He used to sit in that corner, and, screwing up his eyes, look straight at the sun. He did not think, he merely drank in the warmth and the light, as a plant does. The sun and he—nothing and no one else mattered. And Márinka ? Márinka stood for the wherefore of the sun's shining upon the earth. It seemed to him that

only here, in prison, he had learnt for the first time in his life what freedom and happiness meant. At first he was ashamed and afraid of being so simply happy, but then he understood that once more "all was well." "How good it all is, oh Lord!" He tried to pray, but instead of prayer there was only the sighing of the soul before God. Question and answer: Here?—Here. And his whole soul was hushed to perfect stillness.

He made his final peace with Father Pyotr. He realized that though he was "sly," his cunning, as is often the case with Russian people, was mixed with kindness and indeed in such a way that the slyer, the kinder. Perhaps at first he was not quite straight and served both sides, but gradually he left the gaolers and went over to the prisoners. Not with his reason but with his heart he understood that these "malefactors" were the best men in Russia. He came to love them really as a spiritual father loves his children.

"Do you know, you are one of us, Father Pyotr," Golitsin said to him once.

"At last you've grasped it!" Father Pyotr beamed all over. "I am yours, my friend, yours! I want to live and to die with people such as you!"

On April 12, Palm Sunday, Myslovsky came in to Golitsin wearing his vestments, with the chalice in his hands, and said he was administering communion to the prisoners.

"Don't you wish to communicate, prince?" he asked as on his first visit, three months ago.

"No, I don't."

"Why not?"

"Because I don't want to mix up Christ with the Beast."

And he explained to him his old idea about the blas-

phemous union of that which is Cæsar's with that which is God's, of the State and the Church.

"Well, even if it be so, why should you perish? Doesn't a hungry man eat bread even in the robbers' den?"

Golitsin was disarmed and made no answer: he was touched and horrified by the humility, perhaps not of Father Pyotr alone, but of all who stood behind him.

"You know why I have been numbered with the transgressors, Father Pyotr, and you know that I repent of nothing. Would you communicate one unrepentant?"

"Yes, I would."

"Even a murderer?"

"Good heavens, prince, what are you talking about? You have not killed anyone!"

"It's all the same, I wanted to kill—to kill the Beast in the name of Christ. Do you think one may kill in Christ's name, Father Pyotr?"

Father Pyotr was standing by the window. A sunbeam fell on the golden chalice in his hands, and it was shining like the sun. His hands trembled so violently that it looked as though he would drop the chalice. His lips moved silently: he wanted to speak, and could not.

"I don't know," he said at last. "I do not condemn you. God will judge . . ."

Golitsin sank on his knees.

"Forgive me, Father Pyotr! Even if you could, I cannot," he whispered, kissing his hand, and prostrated himself before the chalice.

The priest blessed him silently, and went out.

On April 18, Easter night, Golitsin did not sleep. He kept waiting for something and listening. But not a single sound penetrated through the solid walls of the prison,

there was a dead silence. He stood on the window-sill and peeped through the hole of the ventilator—he had broken blades out of this one too. He saw nothing but darkness, black as ink. He put his ear to the hole and heard, like a confused hum of a beehive, the muffled sound of Easter bells.

He had never felt so vividly that Christ was risen as he felt it now, buried alive in prison.

In May they began to take prisoners out for walks in the little garden within the Alexeyevsky ravelin. Golitsin, too, was taken.

When he stepped out of the last door, he was so blinded by sunlight that he covered his eyes with his hands. The fresh air made him breathless, and like a man who walks on land after a long sea voyage, he felt the earth swaying under him. Shibaev supported him by the arm and led him to the garden.

The garden was in a triangle formed by three high walls and seemed to be at the bottom of a well ; the smooth, bare, granite walls without windows were overgrown at the bottom with green moss and yellowish-grey lichen, like wild rocks. A little iron-bound door with an iron grating led to the garden.

A little grass, a few bushes of lilac, elderberry and birdcherry, two or three birches ; between them a half-broken wooden bench, and, by one of the walls, a green hillock with a dilapidated cross, bent over to one side—Shibaev explained that it was the grave of a prisoner, Princess Tarakanov, who was drowned in her cell during an inundation.

It was a miserable little garden, but to Golitsin it seemed God's paradise. And like the first man in paradise or one risen from the dead, he gazed with an insatiable eagerness on the yellow flowers of the dande-

lions, the sticky little birch leaves, the blue sky and the clouds melting away like a shimmering haze.

The clock chimed right over his head, it seemed. He looked up.

"Come here, your honour, you can see from here," said Shibaev, pointing to one of the corners of the triangle. Golitsin went there, and standing on the drain-trap with his back to the wall, saw sparkling in the sun like a flaming sword the golden spire of the Petropavlovsky fortress, with an archangel blowing a trumpet as though to show that the prisoners would be liberated from this living grave only at the resurrection of the dead.

He went back to the middle of the garden and sat down on the seat. Shibaev was saying something, but he did not hear him. He understood that Golitsin wanted to be alone, walked off, turned away and lighted his pipe.

Golitsin looked long at the white slender stem of the birch, and all at once he put his arms round it, pressed his cheek against it, and closed his eyes. He remembered Márinka: "I used to run out into the copse, young birches stood there, thin like wax tapers, their bark so soft and tender and warm with the sun that it seemed quite alive. I would fling my arms round a tree, press my cheek against it, kiss it and say 'My darling, my own, my little sister.'"

When Golitsin returned to his new "sunny" cell it seemed to him a dark and narrow sepulchre. It was as though he had risen from his coffin for a moment, and then fallen into it again: it would have been better not to rise. He decided not to go out. He refused the next time and the time after, and then he could not resist it, and went.

The birches were in leaf already, and the fragrance of lilac in blossom breathed into his face with its dewy freshness. He sat down on the seat again, embraced the birch-tree, pressed his cheek to it and closed his eyes. There was such anguish in his heart that he wanted to cry out as with pain.

Suddenly there was a sound of footsteps. He opened his eyes, jumped up and put out his hands with a low cry of terror : he thought he saw Márinka's ghost.

" My precious, my own darling ! " She rushed to him, and throwing her arms round his neck, clung to him with her whole body—the real living Márinka.

They did not remember what happened afterwards. They spoke, hurrying, interrupting, not understanding one another, laughing and crying at the same time. He gazed at her in surprise and hardly recognized her : she had grown thinner and paler and blossomed out with a new unknown charm. A girl of nineteen was already a grown-up woman. What calm courage ! There was neither fear nor sorrow in her big dark eyes—only an infinite power of love as in the eyes of that other, the Almighty One, on Raphael's canvas.

" You, Márinka, you . . . Good Lord ! how did you get here ? "

" You didn't expect me, did you ? You thought I wouldn't come ? But here I am. Ankudinitch brought me."

" What Ankudinitch ? "

" Nichiporenko. Don't you know him ? There he is." Golitsin saw Sergeant Nichiporenko, the very one who had once threatened him with flogging ; he was standing a little way off, next to Shibaev.

" I come every day to the fortress, you know. I am

supposed to go to Mass. I didn't know you were in the ravelin. From the boulevard by the church one can see the windows of the cells, all in a row, exactly alike, smeared with chalk—there is no making anything out. I kept looking at them, wondering which was yours. Every one got sick of me. The commandant swore at me, and once threatened to turn me out of the church. So I dressed like a peasant and crept in that way. And Podushkin has a daughter, Adelaïda Yegorovna, an old maid, very kind. She is in love with Kahovsky. . . . Oh dear, there is so much I have to tell you and I am talking nonsense. And you know, when the ice was thawing . . ."

She did not finish, deciding probably that this, too, was nonsense. She had wanted to tell him how the grandmamma's butler, who also often went to the fortress, frightened her by saying that Golitsin was on his deathbed. She rushed to the fortress, but all the bridges were taken down—the ice-floes were floating down the river. The boatmen refused to go. At last she persuaded one : he agreed to take her for twenty-five roubles. He threw a rope to her : she had to tie it to a steel ring fixed to the railings of the quay and then go down the granite steps covered with ice. For a long time she could not manage it : the frozen rope was hard, the steel ring was heavy, the ice-covered granite slippery and her hands weak. But the weak hands conquered everything—the ice, the steel and the granite. She got down into the boat. They set off. The ice-floes rushing towards them mounted one over the other, broke with a crashing sound, threatening to overthrow the boat every minute. The old boatman, pale with fear, swore and prayed alternately. And when they came to the opposite bank he looked at her with admiration.

" A fine girl ! " he must have thought of her, as every one did. It was late ; the fortress gates were shut ; the sentry would not let her pass. She bribed him—he opened the gates. She ran to Podushkin's flat, Adelaïda Yegorovna reassured her : the prince had been very ill, but was better now, and the doctor said he would soon be quite well. " But what is the matter with your hands, your Excellency ! " she cried in alarm. Márinka glanced at her hands : her gloves were in tatters and the palms were covered with blood—she had scratched them against the frozen rope. She smiled, remembering how he used to kiss the palms of her hands.

" Why are you in mourning ? " asked Golitsin, after a pause, during which they looked into each other's eyes, guessing all that they were not able to say. He had only just noticed she was in black and had black crape on her hat.

" Grandmamma is dead."

" And is Nina Lvovna well ? "

" N-no, not very," she said, looking down, and began talking of something else.

He understood that she begged him not to speak of her mother : she wanted to bear that pain alone.

Nichiporenko came up.

" Come, your Excellency."

" Just a minute, Ankudinitch . . ."

" You mustn't. If the commandant sees you, there will be trouble."

Márinka pulled a bundle of paper money out of her pocket and thrust it into his hand. He looked at it—evidently it was not enough. She put her hand in her pocket again, but there was nothing more there. Then she took off her neck a gold chain with a cross on it and gave it to him. He went away.

They began talking again, but now joylessly : they felt that the moment of parting was near.

" Wait a minute, what was I going to say ? Ah, yes," she began hurriedly, whispering into his ear in French. " They say one can escape : there are lots of foreign ships in the Neva near the fortress. Foma Fomitch has already spoken to the captain of one of them and has got a passport. And Adjutant Trussov for ten thousand roubles. . . ."

" Trussov is a rascal, don't trust him. Escape is impossible. And even if it were possible, I don't want to."

" Why ? "

He looked at her silently, so that she understood.

" Well, forgive me, dear, I don't understand these things. And you know, Father Pyotr says that there will be a general amnesty."

" No, Márinka, there won't. And we don't want their mercy."

" Well, they may send you to the end of the world, we shall be together, anyway ! And if . . . " she did not finish, but he understood : " If you die, I will die with you."

" Your Excellency ! " Nichiporenko came again and took her by the hand.

She pushed him away, threw her arms round Golitsin's neck, embraced him as she had done when she came, clinging to him with her whole body, kissed him and made the sign of the cross over him.

" Mother Immaculate keep you."

And in her last look there was neither fear nor sorrow, only the infinite power of love as in the eyes of that other, the Almighty One.

When he came to himself she was gone, and again it

seemed to him that it had only been a vision. He sank down on to the bench and for a long time sat with his eyes closed, not stirring. All at once he felt cold drops on his face and opened his eyes. A cloud had come over the sky : golden threads of rain were trembling in the sunshine, quivering like golden harp-strings with a melodious sound. The big drops fell like bright tears, as though some one were weeping with joy. The grass looked a brighter green, the birch stems a more vivid white, the lilac was more fragrant.

He turned round : there was no one in the garden. Shibaev had gone beyond the gate—he must have understood again that he wanted to be left alone.

Golitsin knelt, bent down, parted the wet grass and touched the earth with his lips. " To love the earth is a sin, one ought to love heavenly things," he remembered, and he laughed and wept with joy. He kissed the earth and whispered : " The earth, the earth, the Immaculate Mother ! "

V

S. I. MURAVYOV-APOSTOL'S NOTES

RUSSIA is perishing, Russia is perishing, save Russia, O Lord "—this is my dying prayer.

I know I am going to die. Every one says there will be no execution, but I believe there will. And even if there were no execution, I think I should die : with a broken leg one cannot walk—with a broken soul one cannot live.

After the defeat of the mutinous Tchernigovsky regiment on January 4 I was brought to Petersburg so dangerously wounded that I was not expected to live.

But I survived : I did not die the first death that I might die the second.

A navigator on an ice-bound ship throws a bottle into the sea with the last comforting thought : people will know how we perished. And before my death I throw into the ocean of the future these notes—my testament to Russia.

I write on scraps of paper and hide them in a secret place : in the floor of my cell there is a brick that lifts. Before I die I will give them to one of my comrades, perhaps they will preserve them.

I write Russian badly. *Je dois avouer à ma honte que j'ai plus d'habitude de la langue française que du russe.* I will write in both languages. Such is our fate : we are aliens in our native land.

I spent my childhood in Germany, Spain and France. When on our return to Russia we saw a cossack sentry on the Prussian frontier, my brother Matvey and I jumped out of the carriage and fell on his neck.

"I am very glad that a long sojourn abroad has not cooled your love for your native country," said mamma as we drove on. "But be prepared, children, I must tell you awful news : in Russia you will find what you do not yet know—slaves."

It was only later we understood this awful news : freedom meant foreign countries ; slavery—our native land.

We are the children of 1812. Then the Russian people by rising unanimously saved their country. That rising was the beginning of this one ; 1812 was the beginning of 1825. We thought then, the age of military glory had ended with Napoleon ; the time for the liberation of the peoples had come. And would Russia

that freed Europe from Napoleon's yoke fail to throw off its own yoke? Russia keeps down the efforts of other nations towards liberty; if Russia becomes free—the whole world will become free.

The other day papa came into my cell and seeing my uniform stained with blood, said to me:

"I will send you new clothes."

"Don't," I answered, "I shall die with stains of blood, shed . . ."

I wanted to say "for my country," but I did not: I have shed blood for something more than my country.

Here is one of my childish memories. I don't know though whether I remember it myself or merely repeat what my brother Matvey told me. In 1801, on March 12, after breakfast, my brother went up to the window, looked into the street and asked mamma:

"Is it Easter to-day?"

"No, of course not."

"Why then are people kissing each other in the street?" That night the Emperor Paul had been killed. This was how Russia united freedom with Christ: the Tsar is killed—Christ is risen.

> "We will communicate from the chalice of blood,
> And I, too, will say 'Christ is risen!'"

This is blasphemy in the mouth of the atheist Pushkin. But he did not know how holy was that against which he blasphemed.

And here is my statement to the Committee of Inquiry about my conversation with Gorbachevsky, the member of the Secret Society of the United Slavs:

"I had maintained that in the case of rising and in the troubled days of revolution our most certain hope and

support would be found in the attachment to religion, so strong in the Russians ; that religion would always be a great power in human hearts and would point men the way to freedom. To this Gorbachevsky answered with an air of doubt and surprise that he, on the contrary, took religion to be opposed to freedom. I began then to prove to him that he was mistaken ; that true freedom became known only from the time when Christian faith was proclaimed, and that France, which was visited with such disasters during the revolution precisely owing to the unbelief that had gained possession of people's minds, ought to be a lesson to us."

The philosopher Hegel thinks that the French revolution is the highest development of Christianity, and that the fact of its happening is as important as the appearance of Christ himself. No, this is true not of the French revolution that *was* but of the true revolution that *will be*. But the Jacobin freedom without God is truly a terror—*la terreur*—insatiable murder, the devil's chalice of blood.

To unite Christ with freedom—this is a great thought, a great all-illumining light.

But perhaps no one will ever know what I have perished for. Not prison walls but walls of solitude divide me from men. Free and with other men I am as much alone as here in prison.

Toujours rêveur et solitaire
Je passerai sur cette terre,
Sans que personne m'ai connu ;
Ce n'est qu'an bout de ma carrière
Que par un grand trait de lumière
On connaîtra ce qu'on a perdu.

Only a silly boy could boast like this. Alas, my end has come and no light has lighted up the world. But it still seems to me that I had a great idea, a great all-illumining light ; only I did not know how to tell men about it. To know the truth and not be able to tell it is the most terrible of human agonies.

The only man in Russia who would understand me is Tchaadaev. I remember as though it were yesterday our night conversations in 1807 in Petersburg in the barracks of the Semyonovsky regiment ; we served together then and together joined the Union of Welfare. I remember his face, pale, tender, as though made of wax or of marble, his thin lips with an ever ironical smile, his grey-blue eyes as sad as though they had already seen the end of the world.

" The image of this world is passing away, a new world is beginning," Tchaadaev used to say. " Mankind is preparing for the fulfilment of the last promises—for the Kingdom of God on earth as in heaven. And perhaps it is Russia—empty, open, white as a sheet of paper on which nothing has been written—without a past, without a present, all in the future—an infinite possibility, *une immense spontanéité*—perhaps it is Russia that is called to fulfil these promises, to solve the riddle of humanity ? "

And all our conversations ended with a prayer : *Adveniat regnum tuum.* Thy kingdom come.

" Let there be one king on earth as there is in heaven—Jesus Christ." These are the words of my Catechism.

" It is a long way from theory to practice," Pestel said once. And he said of me to my brother Matvey : *Votre frère est trop pur.*

Yes, too pure because too theoretical. Purity is

accursed emptiness. Pure theory in action is ridiculous and pitiful Quixotism. I have done nothing, I have only debased a great thought, dropped that which is holy into dirt and blood. But I at least attempted to act; Pestel did not even attempt.

He was arrested on the Fourteenth, on the very day of the rising. He had hesitated for a time, whether to go with the Viatsky regiment to Tulchin, arrest the commander-in-chief and the whole staff of the Second Army and raise the banner of rebellion. But he ended by getting into his carriage and driving to Tulchin, where he was immediately arrested.

He acted sensibly, more sensibly than any of us: he remained within the pure domain of theory.

I could have loved Pestel, but he does not love me—he either fears or despises me. His intellect is marvellously clear. But one cannot understand everything with the intellect. I know something which he does not know. We ought to have acted together. Perhaps the rising was a failure because we failed to do so.

It is easy to roll a stone down hill and difficult to roll it up. Pestel is rolling the stone downwards, and I am pushing it up. He wants politics, I want religion; politics is easy, religion is difficult. He wants that which has been, I want that which has never been yet.

> "I am not a Christian, and not a slave—
> I don't know how to forgive offences,"

said Ryleyev. Christianity is slavery: that's the pit into which everything rolls.

Pestel in the South, Ryleyev in the North—two atheists, two leaders of Russian freedom. And in the

middle there is an innumerable multitude of little ones. "Only fools and scoundrels believe in God nowadays," said a Russian Jacobin to me, a nineteen-year-old lieutenant.

Having no God they take the people for God.

"With the people you can do everything, without the people,—nothing," Gorbachevsky exclaimed once, arguing with me about democracy.

"*La masse n'est rien ; elle ne sera que ce que veulent les individus qui sont tout*" (the multitude is nothing ; it will be merely that which the individuals, who are everything, want it to be), I answered indignantly.

I know this is not so ; but if there is no God, let them prove that it is not so.

"Russia is one as God is one," says Pestel, and he does not believe in God. But if there is no God there is no *one* Russia—there is no Russia at all.

I am rolling the stone uphill and it rolls down—it is the work of Sisyphus. I do not deceive myself, I know ; if there ever is a revolution in Russia, it will follow Pestel's *Russkaya Pravda* and not my Catechism. They will remember him and forget me ; all will follow him and none—me. In Russia, too, there will be the same thing as in France—freedom without God, the devil's chalice of blood.

They will forget, but they will remember again ; they will go away, but they will come back. The stone which the builders rejected the same is become the head of the corner. Russia will not be saved until it carries out my testament : freedom with God.

La divinité se mire dans le monde. L'Essence Divine

ne peut se réaliser que dans une infinité de formes finies. La manifestation de l'Eternal dans une forme finie ne peut être qu'imparfaite : la forme n'est qu'un signe qui indique sa présence.

All human actions are only *signs*. I have only made a sign to you, oh my distant friend in the generations to come, as a dying man makes a sign with his hand when he can no longer speak. Do not judge me for what I have done, but understand what I wanted.

We did not think of the rising and were not preparing for it when, on December 22, as my brother Matvey and I were going from the town Vassilkov near Kiev, where the Tchernigovsky regiment was stationed, to the headquarters in Zhitomir, we heard for the first time about the Fourteenth from the Senate courier who brought the forms for the oath of allegiance.

At the headquarters we heard that the Secret Society had been discovered by the Government and the arrests had begun. And on the way back to Vassilkov my friend Mihail Pavlovitch Bestuzhev-Ryumin, sub-lieutenant of the Poltava regiment, told me that the regiment commander Hebel was pursuing me with gendarmes.

I decided to make my way to the Tchernigovsky regiment and raise a mutiny there. I understood how desperate it was : the struggle of a handful of people with the gigantic forces of the Government was the height of madness. But I could not abandon those who had risen in the North.

We went on to Vassilkov through quiet by-roads, trying to escape from Hebel. There was not much snow and the roads were awful ; our carriage broke down. We hired a Jewish cart at Berdichev and by the night of December 28 managed to get to the village of

Trilessy on the old Kiev road, thirty miles from Vassilkov. We put up in a cossack hut, in the lodging of Lieutenant Kuzmin. Worn out by the journey we immediately went to bed.

During the night Hebel came with the gendarme officer Lang, put sentries all round, awakened us and announced that he arrested us by the order of the Tsar. We gave him our swords, glad that the thing was over without bloodshed—and invited him to drink some tea.

While we were sitting at tea it grew light and four officers, company-commanders of my battalion, came in—Kuzmin, Solovyov, Suhinov and Shchepilo—members of the Secret Society who came from Vassilkov to liberate me. Hebel went out to them into the porch and began reprimanding them for leaving their posts without permission. There was a quarrel. The voices grew louder. Suddenly some one shouted :

" Kill the wretch ! "

All the four rushed at Hebel and seizing the muskets from the sentries, began beating him with the butt-ends, stabbing him with bayonets and swords—anywhere, in the chest, in the stomach, in the arms, in the legs, in the back, in the head. He was a huge strong man, but he was so terrified that he hardly defended himself and only whimpered plaintively : " *Oie, pani Matka Boga ! Oie, swięta Matka Maria !* "

Gustav Ivanovitch Hebel is a Pole, but he considers himself a Russian and never speaks Polish, and here all of a sudden he remembered his native language.

The sentries, for the most part young recruits, did not attempt to defend their commander. All the soldiers hated him for merciless floggings and punishments with "sticks" and had no other name for him than " the brute."

The officers struck and struck him and could not kill him. The porch was small and dark, and they got in each other's way. In their fury they dealt blind, badly aimed blows. They struck him to no purpose as though they were drunk or asleep.

"He's got nine lives, the devil!" some one was shouting frantically.

Making his way to the door, Hebel tried to rush out. But they seized him by the hair, threw him on the floor and falling upon him, continued to beat him. They thought it would be over in a minute; but mustering his last strength, he got on to his feet and almost carried on his shoulders two officers, Kuzmin and Shchepilo, from the porch into the yard.

By this time my brother and I were in the yard already: we broke the window frame and got out.

I don't understand what happened to me when I saw Hebel, covered with wounds and blood, and the terrible as it were sleepy faces of my comrades.

Sometimes one dreams of the devil, and without seeing him, feels from the weight that falls upon one that it is he. It was just such a weight that fell upon me. I remember, too, how once in childhood I was killing a centipede which nearly stung me: I struck and struck at it with a stone and yet could not kill it: half crushed it wriggled so hideously that at last I could stand it no longer and ran away.

My brother Matvey must have run away from Hebel like this. And I remained: it was as though looking at the sleepy faces I, too, suddenly dropped asleep.

I seized a musket and began beating him on the head with the butt-end. He leaned against the wall, crouched and covered his head with his hands. I was striking

him on the hands. I remember the dull thud of the wood against the bones of his fingers as they were being smashed ; I remember there was a gold ring with a chrysolite on his fat white index finger, and the blood gushed from under it ; I remember how he moaned.

I don't know—perhaps I was sorry for him and I wanted to kill him so as to end the torture. But I felt that my blows were weak, sleepy, that one could not kill him in this way and that there would be no end to it ; and still I went on beating him, faint with horror and disgust.

" Stop, stop, Sergey Ivanovitch ! What are you doing ? " some one cried, seizing me by the hand and pulling me away.

I came to myself and realized that my fingers were numb with holding the stock of my musket in the frost.

And the others were still finishing him off and could not do it. Sometimes they came to their senses and stopped and then began again. Kuzmin stuck his sword into him so deeply that every time he had to make an effort to pull it out. But it seemed as though the sword passed through Hebel's body without doing any harm as through the body of a phantom and that it was no longer Hebel, but some other deathless creature.

" He's got nine lives, the devil ! "

At last when every one had left him alone for a minute he made his way to the gate, unconscious and swaying to and fro, and got out into the street. There was an inn next door and a sledge stood there. He sank down upon it, senseless. The horses started off and took him to their master, the steward of the village. Here he was taken off, and secretly sent to Vassilkov.

Hebel received thirteen dangerous wounds and many light ones, but he recovered and will probably survive us all.

This was how we " communicated from the chalice of blood."

When the officers told the soldiers of my liberation, the success was incredible. They all joined me to a man and were ready to follow wherever I took them. On the same day, December 29th, I started for Vassilkov with the fifth company of the musketeers.

On the afternoon of the 30th we got to the town. A chain of pickets was placed against us. But when we came so near that we could see the soldiers' faces, they shouted " Hurrah ! " and joined us. We entered the town and reached the market-square without any opposition. We put sentries to watch the guard-house, the regimental headquarters, the prison, the treasury and the town gates.

In the evening I gave an order that all the companies were to assemble in the market-square at nine o'clock the next morning.

My comrades were preparing for the march all night and came to me for orders. But I shut myself up in my room and let no one in. Bestuzhev and I were correcting and copying out the Catechism.

The idea was suggested to us by De Salvandi's book, *Don Alonzo ou l'Espagne*, which contains a Catechism by means of which the Spanish monks in 1809 incited the people against Napoleon's yoke.

My early childhood was spent in Spain. My father, Ivan Matveyevitch Muravyov-Apostol, was Ambassador in Madrid. And so, as a grown-up man, I wanted to repeat my childhood, to transfer Spain to Russia.

" *Ce sont vos chateaux d'Espagne qui vous ont perdu, mon ami*," as General Benckendorf was pleased to joke at my

expense during the examination at the Committee of Inquiry.

When we had finished writing the Catechism we dictated it to three clerks of the regimental office and told them to make twelve copies. In the morning I called Sub-lieutenant Mazalevsky, gave him a sealed envelope with the copies and ordered him to put on civilian clothes, and, with three soldiers, make his way to Kiev, distributing the Catechism among the people.

Mazalevsky carried out my orders to the letter. He made his way to Kiev through quiet by-roads and ordered the soldiers to go in different directions in the Petchersk and Podol districts, throwing the leaflets under the gates of inns and taverns, which they did.

I should think my Catechism, the good news about the Kingdom of God, is lying to this day by the tavern gates. Oh, infinite Quixotism !

When the companies assembled in the square I sent for the regimental priest.

Father Danila Keyser (a strange name—was he descended from the German colonists ?) was quite a boy, about twenty-six, thin, consumptive, with a tiny little pig-tail, white as flax—little peasant girls have such pig-tails.

When I began to explain to him the purpose of the rising, he turned pale, trembled and got into a perspiration with fear.

" Don't ruin me, your honour ! I have a wife and children."

As I looked at this frightened little hare, a warrior of the Kingdom of God, I understood once more what a long way it is from theory to practice.

Here is the testimony of Father Danila himself, in-

cluded as evidence against me in the questions put to me by the Committee of Inquiry. While I was writing my answers, I copied it out in order to preserve it for posterity.

"About eleven in the morning on December 31st a non-commissioned officer of the 2nd Grenadier company, in marching uniform, came to my lodgings and gave me verbally the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Muravyov-Apostol to go to him at once with the cross for a service at which the catechism would be read. Overwhelmed by fear and not knowing to whom to turn for defence, I did not dare to disobey and sent the sacristan, Ivan Ohlestin, to the regimental church to fetch the books, and when he returned I went with him and the deacon to Muravyov's lodgings where there were a number of officers. As I had not been long with the regiment I did not know these officers and saw Muravyov himself for the first time in my life. He ordered me not to go anywhere from his flat, where I stood by the door for about half-an-hour before him and the other officers. One of them came up to me and asked if I was quite ready, to which I answered that I had the book of special services and a short printed catechism with me. The officer took the catechism from the sacristan, opened it and said that they had their own written one. Then Muravyov, changing his mind, said to me that they did not want an ordinary service, but something shorter. I saw there was something strange going on and though I did not understand what they were saying to each other in French, but seeing several loaded pistols on the table, sentries with loaded muskets in the room and in the yard, I was frightened and especially when I made up my mind to go out from there and did not dare to. Muravyov put on a sort of Armenian cap and a scarf and going with

the officers to the troops drawn up in the square ordered me to go with them ; riding up to them, he gave the word of command, the soldiers formed a circle and the officers going into the middle of it with loaded pistols and some of them with daggers, surrounded me ; then at Muravyov's order I put on my vestments, sang with the deacon and the sacristan " The King of Heaven," " Our Father " and the special Christmas canticles, and I did nothing more in the way of prayers. Then an officer gave me a paper which I had never seen before, and I had never heard what was in it ; one of the officers standing behind me recited it by heart and I, being in such extreme terror, was forced to repeat it without remembering what it contained. And whether at the same time I pronounced any other words, I do not in the least remember."

Poor Father Danila, unwilling martyr of Russian freedom !

The morning was sunny. The first snow had fallen in the night. Winter had come to stay, and, as often happens in the Ukraine, there was a sudden breath of spring in the midst of it. It was freezing in the shade and thawing in the sun. The sparrows were chirruping, the pigeons cooing on the golden cupolas of the churches warmed by the sun. In the gardens the apple and cherry trees decked out in hoar-frost were white as though in blossom. The white walls of the cossack huts looked dark under the snow, and the dirty hovels of the Jews seemed dirtier than ever.

As I looked into the deep blue sky I remembered how the Ukrainian girls sing under people's windows on Christmas Eve, " Keep well, and not by yourself but with *dear God.*" In the dear sky—dear God.

The troops drew up in the square in a broad column

in full marching uniform. I was on horseback facing them and the banners.

Father Danila, more dead than alive, was reading the Catechism in such a weak voice that it could hardly be heard. Bestuzhev went up to him, took the paper from him and began solemnly and in a loud voice :

" In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

" What did God create man for ?

" That he should believe in Him and be free and happy.

" Why then are the Russian people and soldiers unhappy ?

" Because tyrannical Tsars have robbed them of liberty.

" What then does our holy faith command the Russian people and army to do ?

" To repent of their long servility and rising against tyranny and impiety, establish a government conformable to the law of God."

It seemed, not only the eagerly-attentive soldiers and the frightened Vassilkov residents—the town captain, the judge, the postmaster, the clerk with a bandaged cheek, and the gentleman-landowner from the steppes, and the old cossack with a grey moustache and the fat coster-woman, and two lean red-haired Jews in black caps—not only all these people, but the dismal yellow walls of the district treasury, of the regimental armoury and commissariat, listened in unutterable surprise, as though saying " That's not it, that's not it ! " But the cooing pigeons in the sunshine, the cherry-trees covered with hoar-frost as with blossom, the resounding drops of the thawing icicles and the deep blue sky answered, " That's it ! That's it ! "

" Christ said, be not the slaves of men since you have

been ransomed by My blood," Bestuzhev went on reading still louder and more solemnly. "The world did not heed this holy commandment and fell into an abyss of misery. But our sufferings have touched the Almighty : He sends us to-day freedom and salvation. The Russian army is going to re-establish faith and freedom in Russia, so that there may be one King in heaven and on earth—Jesus Christ."

When he had finished there was silence and in the stillness my voice rang out. I don't remember what I said. I only remember there was a moment when it seemed to me that they suddenly grasped it all. I shall die having accomplished nothing, so be it—that moment was worth dying for !

I took off my cap, crossed myself and cried, raising my sword :

"For faith and freedom, lads ! For Christ our King ! Hurrah ! "

"Hurrah ! " they answered, at first timidly and doubtfully, and then all of a sudden with frantic conviction : "Hurrah, Constantine ! "

It would have been stupid to shout "Hurrah, Jesus Christ ! " and so somebody sensibly shouted, "Hurrah, Constantine ! " and every one caught it up joyfully—realizing that "This was it."

I realized it too ; I seemed again to have suddenly dropped into the terrible sleep and to see Hebel covered with wounds and blood : he was crouching against the wall, covering his head with his hands and I was beating and beating him with the butt-end of my musket—wanting to kill him and unable to do so : "He's got nine lives, the devil ! "

The devil was laughing at me with a triumphant laugh :

" Hurrah, hurrah, hurrah, Constantine ! "

No, I cannot speak of it any more : it's shameful and terrible. And there is not time—death is near.

Let others tell what was the end of my crusade for Christ or Constantine ; how for four days and nights we circled as though spellbound round one and the same place, between Vassilkov, the White Church and Trilessy, where we had been killing Hebel ; we kept waiting for reinforcements, but no one came to our assistance—all had failed us, all betrayed us. At first there were so many volunteers that we did not know how to get rid of them and afterwards the officers began one by one to lag behind and run off to Kiev to the authorities as best they could—some even in their dressing-gowns. The spirit of the troops deteriorated. When the soldiers asked my permission " to do a little robbing " and I refused, they began to grumble : " Muravyov isn't for Tsar Constantine but for some sort of freedom ! "— " There is one God in heaven and one Tsar on earth— Muravyov is deceiving us ! "

Even while we were at Vassilkov there were disorders in the taverns. And during the march sentries were posted by every tavern on our way, but they were the first to get drunk.

I shall never forget a drunken soldier who reeled out of a tavern shouting and swearing violently :

" I am not afraid of anybody ! Make merry ! It's freedom now ! "

In all the taverns they were discussing the massacres that were to be : " One ought to sharpen the knives for two days, and then begin : the Tsar has issued an ukase that all the gentry and the Jews are to have their throats cut, so that there would be none of them left."

At one tavern a cossack from Tchuguev said : " If the killing were to begin, I shouldn't want either a lance or a sword ; I would simply sharpen and pickle a pole and thread on to it seventy gentlefolk and seventy Jews." And a soldier from the White Church promised : " When ' Christ is risen ' is sung on Easter night, then the killing will begin."

This was how the people united Christ with freedom !

Let others tell how the six best companies of my battalion, the pride and glory of the regiment, were transformed into a band of robbers, into Pugachov's drunken rabble. It happened before I had time to realize it : as milk turns sour in a thunderstorm, so everything went wrong at once.

It was then I understood the most awful thing of all : for the Russian people freedom means running riot, means debauchery, crime, insatiable fratricide ; slavery is with God, freedom—with the devil.

And who knows, had I agreed to be the chieftain of this robbers' band, a new Pugachov, perhaps they would not have betrayed me : devils would have fled from all parts to my assistance. We would have marched to Kiev, to Moscow and Petersburg and perhaps would have given a shake to the Russian Empire.

On January 3rd, about two o'clock in the afternoon, we were met at the Ustimovsky hills by four squadrons of the Mariupol Hussars, with two cannons, under the command of Major-General Heismar. The authorities were so alarmed that against my handful of a thousand men they moved almost all the regiments of the Third Corps. Heismar's detachment was merely reconnoitring. We knew that all the officers in this detachment were members of the Secret Society, but we did not

know that the day before they had been arrested and replaced by others. We thought they were coming to help us and went nearly mad with joy—we believed in the miracle. And not we alone—the soldiers, too, to the last man.

It was another such radiant day as on the 31st : the sky was as deep and blue and kind—with " dear God." And again, as in the market-square at Vassilkov, there was a moment when it seemed to me that they had understood it all and that the robber band was a host of God.

The soldiers went straight at the cannons with an unflinching courage. A shot thundered, a cannon-ball whizzed over our heads. We still went on. The shells screeched. The fire was murderous. The wounded fell. We still went on—we believed in the miracle.

Suddenly I had the sensation of being struck on the head with a stick. I fell off my horse with my face in the snow. When I came to myself I saw Bestuzhev. He was lifting me and wiping my face with a handkerchief. My face was covered with blood ; the handkerchief was soaked and the blood still flowed. I was wounded on the head by a shell.

Sergeant Lasykin, my favourite, came up to me. I did not recognize him : his face was puckered up unnaturally and he was sobbing with queer, womanish little sobs.

" What have you ruined us for, you fiend, anathema, son of a bitch ! "

Suddenly he raised his bayonet and dashed at me. Somebody shielded me. The soldiers surrounded us and took us to the hussars.

I learnt afterwards that they threw down their muskets and surrendered without firing a shot as soon as they realized that there would be no miracle.

In the evening we were brought under escort to Trilessy—that cursed place again—and put into an empty tavern. My brother Matvey procured a bed and made me lie down. My wound had not been bandaged and from loss of blood I was constantly fainting. It was difficult to lie flat ; my brother lifted me and put my head on his shoulder.

On the straw in the opposite corner lay Kuzmin, also wounded ; all the bones of his right shoulder had been splintered by a shell. The pain must have been unendurable, but he concealed it and did not groan once, so that no one knew he had been wounded.

It grew dark. A light was brought in. Kuzmin asked my brother to come up to him. Matvey pointed to my head without speaking. Then Kuzmin crawled up to him with an effort, pressed his hand in the special way by which the United Slavs recognized one another and crawled back to his corner again. No one wanted to speak ; all were silent.

Suddenly there was the sound of a shot. I fainted. When I came to myself I saw through the smoke that still filled the room Kuzmin lying on the straw in the corner, his head covered with blood. He shot himself in the temple from a pistol he had hidden in his coat sleeve, and died immediately.

He had sworn " Death or freedom "—and he carried out his vow.

My younger brother, Ippolit Ivanovitch Muravyov-Apostol, a boy of nineteen, also perished on the Ustimovsky hills.

On December 31st, just before we set off, he drove in a post-chaise right up to the market-square at Vassilkov. He had only just brilliantly passed his examinations at

the School of Military Science, got his commission and been appointed on the staff of the Second Army. He left Petersburg on the 13th, bringing us a message from the Northern Society about the beginning of the rising and a request for help.

I wanted to save him, implored him to go on, but he remained with us. He believed in the miracle more than any of us. He exchanged pistols with Kuzmin on the spot, also taking the oath of "Death or freedom" and carried out his vow. On the Ustimovsky hills, seeing me fall, struck down by a shell and thinking I was killed, he shot himself in the mouth.

At daybreak on January 4th a sledge was brought to take my brother Matvey and me to the White Church. We asked the escort's permission to say good-bye to Ippolit. For a long time they did not agree, but at last took us to a deserted hut. Here on the bare floor of an empty cold and dark room lay the naked bodies of the killed : the hussars evidently had not scrupled to rob them and had stripped them naked. Among them was the body of Ippolit. He was beautiful like a young god in his nakedness. His face was not disfigured by the shot—there was only one dark little spot on the left cheek under the eye. His expression was calm and proud.

My brother helped me to kneel down. I kissed the dead boy on the lips and said :

"Till we meet again!"

It is strange : my conscience torments me for all whom I have ruined, but not for him—the purest victim of purest love.

I had said then, "Till we meet again," and now I know that the meeting will be soon. You will be the

first to meet me *there*, my Ippolit, my angel with white wings !

To-morrow, July 12th, the sentence is to be declared.

The sentence is declared : Pestel, Ryleyev, Kahovsky, Bestuzhev-Ryumin and I are to be quartered. But " in accordance with the monarch's mercy," the sentence is commuted : " to be hanged." They regard it as mercy to hang instead of quartering. But I still think we shall be shot : officers have never been hanged in Russia.

The same sentence was passed on the dead—Kuzmin, Shchepilo, Ippolit Muravyov-Apostol : " to be quartered " ; but since the dead cannot be either quartered or hanged " after reading out the sentence, the gallows are to be put over their graves instead of crosses and their names nailed on it to their everlasting shame."

They will chuck them like dogs into one pit, a grave without a cross, probably there at the White Church near the Ustimovsky hills.

" White Church "—a prophetic name. Yes, there will, there will be a White Church over them !

I remember my meeting with Emperor Nicolas. He promised to forgive us all, embraced and kissed me and shed tears : " I am perhaps no less deserving of pity than you are. *Je ne suis qu'un pauvre diable*."

Poor devil, the very poorest of all devils ! Forgive him, Lord : he knows not what he does !

The execution is to-morrow. I don't care whether they shoot or hang us, so long as they make haste. I will accept death as God's best gift.

My brother Matvey envies me : he says death would

be bliss to him. He thinks of nothing but suicide. He wants to starve himself to death. I am writing to him and imploring him for the sake of our mother's memory not to take his life : " The soul which escapes from its place before its time will receive a vile habitation and be forever parted from those it loves." But as I write this, I think : with a broken leg one cannot walk, with a broken soul one cannot live.

Matvey does not want to live and Bestuzhev does not want to die. He is twenty-three, almost a child. He did not expect a death sentence, was hoping till the last moment. He is in terror and anguish. I can hear him even now rushing to and fro in his cell, struggling like a bird in a cage. This is more than I can bear !

My brother Matvey and Bestuzhev are two opposite extremes. One is too heavy, the other too light—like two scoops of the scales, and I am the ever-trembling needle between them. Matvey did not believe in the miracle at all, Bestuzhev believed in it entirely, and I half-believed. Perhaps that is why I have perished.

I dreamt of mother and Ippolit. It was a joy such as one never has in waking life. Both said I was silly and that I did not know the chief thing.

I am in cell N12 of the Kronverk section, and into the cell next to mine, N11, they have transferred from the Alexeyevsky ravelin Prince Valeryan Mihailovitch Golitsin. When the place got so full that there was no more room, the cells were divided with wooden partitions into something like cages. The wood was damp and when it dried up, there were cracks between the planks. Through such a crack Golitsin and I talk to each other. I am fond of him. He understands *everything* : he too,

is a friend of Tchaadaev's. It is a pity there is no time to write it down. We have talked of the Son and the Spirit, of Earth, the Immaculate Mother. And just as in my dream I feel that the chief thing I do not know.

I will give these notes to Golitsin ; let him read them and give them to Father Pyotr Myslovsky, who promised to preserve them.

During the last few days I have been writing freely, without hiding. No one watches me. They give me plenty of paper and ink. They are pampering the victim.

But I must end : the execution is to-night. I will seal the bottle and throw it into the ocean of the future.

The sun is setting—my last sun. To-day again it is blood-red, as it has been all these days. Through the burning heat and drought the forests and the peat marshes round the town are on fire. There is a smell of burning in the air. The sun rises and sets like a dull-red ball, and during the day it shows crimson through the smoke like a glowing firebrand.

Oh, this blood-red sun, the blood-red torch of the Eumenides, that has arisen over Russia perhaps for us and will set no more !

I had a dream.

With the mutinous troops, a robber band, I passed victoriously through the whole of Russia. Everywhere freedom without God, crime, insatiable fratricide. And over the whole of Russia, burnt out and black, was the blood-red sun, the devil's " chalice of blood." And all Russia—a robber band, a drunken rabble, was following me, shouting :

"Hurrah, Pugachov-Muravyov! Hurrah, Jesus Christ!"

For me this dream has no more terror, but will it not have terror for our grandchildren and great-grandchildren?

No, Tchaadaev is wrong: Russia is not a blank sheet of paper—there is already written on it *The Kingdom of the Beast.* Terrible is the Tsar-Beast; but perhaps still more terrible is the Beast-people.

Russia will not be saved until there is wrung from her depths a cry of pain and penitence which will resound throughout the world.

I hear the heavy tread: the Beast is coming.

Russia is perishing, Russia is perishing. Save Russia, O God!

VI

"WHEN I enter Sergey Ivanovitch's cell I am overcome by the same feeling of reverence as when I approach the altar before the Divine service." Golitsin recalled these words of Father Pyotr when he read Muravyov's notes, his "Testament to Russia."

The window of the cell was open; in these unbearably hot July days the prisoners were allowed to have the windows open, or they would have suffocated. In the stillness of the night there came from the direction of the Kronverk rampart the dull thud of axe and hammer. Golitsin did not hear it while he was reading, but when he finished it caught his ear.

Knock, knock, knock. Stillness—then again, knock, knock, knock. "What are they doing?" he wondered.

He had noticed in the morning some carpenters at work on the rampart : they were building something, and kept putting up and then lowering again two black posts. A General aide-de-camp on horseback, wearing a hat with white plume, was watching the carpenters' work through a lorgnette. Then everybody went away.

And then again, knock, knock, knock. He went up to the window and peeped out. The July night was light, but, as all these days, the air was full of smoke, mist and a smell of burning. In the mist shadows were seen moving on the rampart : they were raising and lowering two black posts. " What are they doing ? What are they doing ? " Golitsin wondered.

From the next cell came the sound of whispering : through a crack in the wall Muravyov was whispering with Bestuzhev, preparing him for death.

Golitsin lay down on the bed and muffled his head in the blanket.

He remembered the conversation he had had with Father Pyotr the day before about the five men sentenced to death. " Don't be afraid of what I am going to tell you," said Myslovsky. " They will be taken to the gallows, but at the last moment a messenger will come with reprieve." " Why, but the sentence has been confirmed," observed Golitsin. " That's only a pretence," Father Pyotr whispered mysteriously.

Golitsin recalled eagerly other rumours he had heard about the reprieve.

All the prison officials were certain that there would be no execution. " They will be reprieved," Major Podushkin maintained stoutly. " Capital punishment has been abolished in the Russian Empire ; how can the Tsar override the law ? " " They will be reprieved,"

said the sentries. "The Tsar himself is to blame for the Fourteenth, so what is there to hang them for?"

It was said that Empress Marie Feodorovna received a letter from the Tsar in which he assured her that the sentence will involve no bloodshed. Empress Alexandra Feodorovna begged on her knees for reprieve. "I shall give a surprise to Russia and Europe," promised the Tsar to the Duke of Wellington.

When the Supreme Court passed the sentence, the Tsar said that "he would consent neither to the quartering, which is a painful death, nor to the shooting, which is a punishment appropriate to military crimes only, nor even to decapitation, nor, in short, to any execution involving bloodshed." The judges decided on hanging: no blood would be shed. But perhaps they made a mistake—perhaps the Tsar meant reprieve and not hanging?

It was no use Golitsin's burying his head under the bedclothes: knock, knock, knock. Stillness—and again: knock, knock, knock.

"Who then is putting them to death? Tsar or Russia, the Beast or the kingdom of the Beast?" he thought suddenly and leapt up in terror. There on the rampart two black posts were being raised and lowered again, and upon them the fate of Russia was trembling as upon terrible scales. "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee! If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall

not leave in thee one stone upon another ; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation."

Golitsin fell on his knees and joined his whisper to the whisper of the one about to die that reached him from the other side of the wall :

" Russia is perishing, Russia is perishing ! God save Russia ! "

When Father Pyotr left Ryleyev after hearing his confession and giving him communion, Ryleyev looked at his watch : it was nineteen minutes past twelve. He knew they would come for him at three. There were left two hours and forty-one minutes. He put the watch on the table and looked at the hand as it moved : nineteen, twenty, twenty-one minutes. Well, was he afraid ? No, not afraid, only it seemed strange. It reminded him of what he had read in an astronomical book : if a man found himself on a small planet, he could lift without the slightest difficulty the most terrible weights, and throw off enormous stones falling upon him as though they were rubber balls.

Or it was something like " the magnetic state " (he had once studied mesmerism and read about that too) : a needle was thrust into the clairvoyant's body, but she did not feel it. So he, too, was sticking needles into his soul, one after another, to see if they would prick him.

Fear did not prick, but anger ? He remembered his anger against the Tsar : " He deceived, debased, corrupted, tortured, mocked me—and now he is killing me." But there was no anger either. He realized that being angry with him was the same as striking the wall against which one has hurt oneself.

And shame ? It used to burn him as with a hot iron

when he recalled how Kahovsky struck him on the face and cried "Scoundrel!" But now even shame did not burn him; it was extinguished as blazing iron is extinguished in water. Kahovsky might never know, no one might ever know that he, Ryleyev, was not a scoundrel—it was enough for him that he knew it himself.

He tried one more needle, the sharpest one of all—pity. He thought of Natasha and began looking over her letters. He read:

"Ah, my dear, I don't know what is happening to me. Between fear and hope I wait for the decisive moment. Imagine my position: alone in the world with an innocent child, already fatherless. We had no one but you, and all our happiness was in you. I pray the Almighty to comfort me with the tidings that you are innocent. I know your soul: you never wished evil and always did good. I adjure you, do not lose courage in the hope of God's mercy and the compassion of the angel-like Tsar. Farewell, my poor sufferer! God's mercy be with you! I will send the vest and two night-caps with the linen. Nastenka is well. She thinks you are in Moscow. I am telling her that we shall soon go to papa. She is glad, grows eager and asks, 'How soon?'"

On the same letter was written in Nastenka's handwriting with big childish letters:

"Dear papa, I kiss your hand. Come back quick, I miss you. Let us go to grandmamma's."

All at once he felt there was a mist before his eyes. Could it be tears? The needle passed through the dead flesh and pierced the living. Did it hurt? Yes, but not much. It was over now. He merely thought, "What a good thing I refused to see Natasha before

dying ; I should have frightened her to death ; the living are afraid of the dead ; the nearer they are, the greater the terror."

He remembered that he must write to her. He sat down to the table, dipped the pen in ink, but did not know what to write. He forced himself, made up the sentences : " I am in so comforting and peaceful a state of mind that I cannot express it. Oh, my dear, how salutary it is to be a Christian ! "

He smiled. The other day Father Pyotr had told him of the refusal of the bishops, members of the Supreme Court, to sign a death sentence : " Whatever sentence may be passed, we do not oppose it, but in so far as we are in holy orders, we cannot sign it." And all that he was writing seemed also to be " in so far as."

When he had been looking over Natasha's letters just before he found his own notes to her, chiefly about money and business.

" Seven hundred roubles is owing to the pawnbroker. Pay the tailor's bill if you hear that Kahovsky cannot pay. . . . My shares are lying in the top drawer of the bureau, on the left-hand side. . . . Tell them in the country to sell the oats and hay. . . . It would be a good thing to set free Konon the foreman, but I am sorry to part with him—he is an honest old man, one doesn't find such people nowadays. . . ."

As a man looks with wonder at his old portrait, so he wondered now : " Can it have been me ? "

Suddenly he felt sick.

" I am sick here as in a strange land.
When shall I throw off my life ?
Who will give me wings of a dove
To fly away and rest ?
The whole world is like a putrid grave,
The soul from body seeks release."

The odour of death was wafted to him from life. It must be that not only the living abhor the smell of death, but also the dead—the smell of the living.

He looked at the ikon—should he pray? No, prayer was over. Now everything was prayer: his breathing was prayer and his struggling for breath in the halter would be prayer too.

He began thinking of something again, but in a strange way, without thoughts as it were. The thoughts were invisible like the spokes in a rapidly-revolving wheel. He only kept repeating with a growing surprise: "Here it is, that's it, that's it!"

He was tired and lay down. He thought, "I mustn't drop asleep; they say people sentenced to death sleep soundly,"—and he dropped asleep.

He was awakened by the noise of footsteps and the banging of doors in the corridor. He jumped up and rushed to his watch: it was past three. There was the rattle of locks and bolts. He went cold with terror as though he were plunged into icy water, head and all.

But when he looked into the faces of Major Podushkin and the warder Trofimov, as they came in, the terror left him instantly, as though he had taken it off and passed it on to them: they were afraid and not he.

"Is it time, Yegor Mihailovitch?" he asked Podushkin.

"No, there's plenty of time yet. I wouldn't have come, but they are hurrying us, though they aren't ready themselves. . . ."

Ryleyev understood: the gallows were not ready. Neither Podushkin nor Trofimov looked him in the eyes; they seemed ashamed. Ryleyev noticed that he, too, was ashamed. It was the shame of death, something

like the feeling of nakedness : as clothes are taken off the body, so the body is taken off the soul.

Trofimov brought the fetters, the convict's clothes—Ryleyev was wearing the tail-coat he had on when he was arrested—and a clean shirt out of the parcel Natasha had sent last : according to the Russian custom, dying people put on clean linen.

After changing his clothes he sat down to the table and while Trofimov was putting shackles on his feet, he began writing to Natasha. It was all again " in so far as," but he did not worry about it any more : she would understand. One thing only came right from his heart : " My dear, you have made me happy for eight years. Words cannot express my feelings. God will reward you for everything. His holy Will be done."

Father Pyotr came in. He began talking of repentance, forgiveness, submission to the Divine will. But noticing that Ryleyev was not listening, he stopped and simply asked :

" Well, Kondraty Fyodorovitch, is there something more I can do for you ? "

" No, I don't think there is. I believe that's all, Father Pyotr," Ryleyev answered as simply, and smiled ; he wanted to joke and say, " So it wasn't a pretence after all." But glancing at Myslovsky he saw that he was so frightened and so ashamed that he felt sorry for him. He took his hand and put it to his heart.

" Do you feel it beating ? "

" Yes."

" Evenly ? "

" Evenly."

He took a handkerchief out of his pocket and gave it to the priest.

"Give it to the Tsar. You won't forget, will you?"

"No, I won't. And what shall I say?"

"Nothing. He will know."

It was the handkerchief with which Nicolas had wiped Ryleyev's tears when at their interview he wept at the Tsar's feet, overwhelmed, "torn to pieces," by his mercy.

Podushkin went out and returned with such an air that Ryleyev understood it was time.

He got up, crossed himself looking at the ikon, crossed Trofimov, Podushkin and Father Pyotr himself, smiling at him as though meaning to say, "Yes, now it is no longer you who bless me, but I—you." He made the sign of the cross in all directions, blessing, as it were, invisible friends and enemies; it seemed he was doing it not of himself but at somebody else's behest. His movements were so sure and authoritative that no one was surprised, all felt it was as it should be.

"Well, Yegor Mihailovitch, I am ready," said he, and they all went out of the cell.

VII

KAHOVSKY remained faithful to himself till the end: "Alone I have lived, and alone I will die."

When he met his comrades in the corridor he did not speak to them, did not shake hands: he continued regarding them all as "scoundrels." He had grown hard, stony.

He spent days and nights reading. Podushkin's daughter, Adelaïda Yegorovna, supplied him with books. The window of his cell was right opposite the windows of Podushkin's flat. The old spinster fell in love with

Kahovsky. She sat by the window playing a guitar and singing :

> "He sits there in his tower behind high walls
> Deprived of every comfort, poor thing.
> You would be feeling sorry for him too
> If there you could but see him for yourself."

Kahovsky's heart was tender and his eyes were short-sighted : he did not see her face and only saw her dresses, all colours of the rainbow—blue, green, pink, yellow. She seemed to him as beautiful as Dulcinea to Don Quixote.

He pounced eagerly on the books and grew particularly fond of Dante's *Divine Comedy*. He had travelled abroad, been to Italy, and understood a little Italian.

When on the night of the execution Father Pyotr asked him at confession whether he forgave his enemies, Kahovsky answered :

"I forgive every one except two scoundrels—the Tsar and Ryleyev."

"My son, before the holy communion, before death . . ." Father Pyotr was horrified, "I adjure you by God, humble yourself, forgive . . ."

"I won't."

"What am I to do with you, then ? If you don't forgive them, I can't give you communion."

"Well, I don't care."

Father Pyotr had to take a sin upon his soul and communicate one who was unrepentant.

When Podushkin and Trofimov came to take him to the execution Kahovsky looked at them with such an air that it seemed "in high scorn he held even hell."—"*Come avesse lo inferno in gran dispitto.*"

"He went to his death as though he were going to the next room to light a pipe," Podushkin said in surprise.

"Pavel Ivanovitch Pestel is unlike all the other conspirators," Father Pyotr used to say. "He is a profound mathematician ; and he believes that he is right as though it were a truth of mathematics. He is always and everywhere the same. Nothing shakes his firmness. He seems to be capable of bearing upon his shoulders the weight of two Alpine mountains."

"I didn't even catch what it is they are going to do to us, and it doesn't matter, only I wish they would make haste," said Pestel, after the reading of the sentence.

And when Pastor Reinbot asked him whether he was ready for death, Pestel answered :

"One is sorry to part with an old dressing-gown, but there is nothing for it."

"What dressing-gown ?"

"That's what our Russian poet Delvig said :

"It isn't death we fear, but we are sorry to part with the body,
Thus we reluctantly change an old dressing-gown for new."

"Do you believe in God, Herr Pestel ?"

"What shall I say ? *Mon cœur est matérialiste mais ma raison s'y refuse.* I don't believe with my heart, but I know with my intellect that there must be something which men call God. God is as necessary in metaphysics as zero in mathematics."

"*Schrecklich ! Schrecklich !*" whispered Reinbot, and began speaking of immortality and of life beyond the grave.

Pestel listened as a man who is very sleepy ; at last he interrupted Reinbot with a smile :

" To be frank, I am tired even of this life. The law of the world is the law of identity : *a* is *a*, Pavel Ivanovitch Pestel is Pavel Ivanovitch Pestel. And that for thirty-three years. It's unbearably boring ! No, it's better if there is nothing. Nothingness there, and it's the same here. From one nothingness to another. Good sleep is without dreams, good death—without an after-life. I am awfully sleepy, Herr Pastor."

" *Schrecklich ! Schrecklich !* "

He decisively refused communion :

" Thank you, it is quite unnecessary for me."

And when Reinbot began to persuade him to repent, he said, suppressing a yawn :

" *Aber, mein lieber Herr Reinbot, wollen wir uns doch besser etwas über die Politik unterhalten.*"

And he began talking about the English parliament. Reinbot got up.

" Excuse me, Herr Pestel, I cannot speak of such things to a man who is going to his death."

Pestel also got up and shook hands.

" Well, good night then, Herr Reinbot."

" What am I to say to your parents ? "

A shadow passed over Pestel's sallow, sleepy, puffy face—he looked at that moment more than ever like Napoleon after Waterloo.

" Tell them," he said in a slightly altered voice, " that I am perfectly calm, but that I cannot think of them without poignant grief. Give this letter to my sister Sophie."

It was a short letter in French :

" I thank you a thousand times, dear Sophie, for the lines you have added to our mother's letter. I am deeply

touched by your tender compassion and your friendship for me. Be assured, my dear, that never could a sister be loved more tenderly than you have been loved by me. Good-bye, my dear Sophie. Your tender brother and true friend, Pavel."

Having given Reinbot the letter, he went with him to the door as though wishing to get rid of him. But he stopped in the doorway, pressed his hand warmly and said with a smile :

" Good night, Herr Pastor. Well, say to me, say to me quite simply—good night ! "

" I cannot say anything to you, Herr Pestel. I only can . . ."

Reinbot did not finish, embraced him with a sob, and went out.

" Dreadful man ! " he used to say afterwards. " It seemed to me I was speaking to the devil himself. I left the hard-hearted one, entrusting him solely to God's mercy."

When he was changing his clothes before going to the execution, Pestel noticed he had lost the golden cross he wore round his neck, a present from Sophie. He was frightened, turned pale and trembled, as though he had suddenly lost all his courage. He searched for it long, fumbling with trembling fingers. At last he found it. He kissed it eagerly, put it on and at once felt calm again.

Waiting for Podushkin, he sat down on a chair, bent his head and closed his eyes. Perhaps he did not sleep, but he looked as though he were asleep.

Mihail Pavlovitch Bestuzhev-Ryumin was, in his own words, afraid of death " as the meanest coward." He was like a bird in a cage when a cat stretches its

paw after it. Sometimes he wept with fear, as little children do, and was not ashamed. And sometimes he marvelled at himself :

" What has become of me ? I have never been a coward. Why, I stood under gun-fire at the Ustimovsky hills and was not afraid. Why am I in such a panic now ? "

" Then you were going to face death of your own will, and now you are forced. But you mustn't be afraid of being afraid, and then it will pass," Muravyov tried to comfort him, but he saw it was no use : Bestuzhev was so terrified that it seemed his reason would give way or that he would really die " like the meanest coward."

Muravyov knew how he could calm him. Bestuzhev was afraid because he still hoped that " it was a pretence " and that at the last moment a messenger would gallop up from the Tsar with a reprieve. To conquer fear, it was necessary to take away hope. But Muravyov did not know whether he ought to do this ; perhaps some one was covering his eyes with the holy veil of hope.

Bestuzhev was in the cell N 13, next to Muravyov. There was a wooden partition between them as between Muravyov and Golitsin, and there also was a crack in it. They moved their beds so that they could speak to each other while lying down.

During the last night before the execution Muravyov was reading to Bestuzhev the Gospel in French ; they did not either of them understand Slavonic very well.

" And they came to a place called Gethsemane ; and He saith to His disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray. And he taketh with Him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed and to be very heavy . . ."

"Wait, Seryozha," Bestuzhev stopped him. "What is this, eh?"

"Why, Misha?"

"Does it really say this?"

"Yes."

"But what could He be 'sore amazed' at? Could it be at death?"

"Yes, suffering and death."

"But how could God be afraid of death?"

"Not God, but man. He was God and Man together."

"Well, man then. But aren't there plenty of fearless men? Socrates, for instance, had drunk the hemlock, his legs had turned numb and he was still joking. But here it is different. Why, it's like me, isn't it?"

"Yes, Misha, it is."

"But I am a mean wretch?"

"No, you are not. You are perhaps better than many fearless men. One ought to love life and to fear death."

"But you don't fear it?"

"Yes, I do. Not so much as you do, but perhaps that isn't a good thing. Matvey and Pestel do not fear death at all, and that's certainly bad."

"And Ippolit?"

"Ippolit did not see death. Those who love very much do not see death. But you and I don't love enough, so we ought to fear."

"Well, go on reading!"

Muravyov read on. But Bestuzhev stopped him again.

"I say, Seryozha, do you think Father Pyotr is an honest man?"

"Yes, he is."

"Then why does he deceive us about the reprieve? Have you heard the story about the messenger?"

"Yes."

"Why does he deceive us? There will be no messenger, will there? What do you think, there won't? Seryozha, why are you silent?"

From his voice Muravyov understood that he was again on the point of crying shamelessly like a small child. He was silent, not knowing what to do—whether to tell the truth and take off the holy veil of hope or to have pity and deceive him. He had pity, he deceived him:

"I don't know, Misha, perhaps there will be a messenger."

"Well, go on reading," Bestuzhev said joyfully. "Read me Isaiah—you know, what you have copied out."

Muravyov began reading:

"And it shall come to pass,

"They will beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

"The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb. And the suckling child shall play on the hole of the asp.

"They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

"And it shall come to pass, that before they call I will answer; and while they are yet speaking I will hear.

"As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you . . ."

"Stop, stop! How fine that is! Not Father,

but Mother. . . . And it really will be so, won't it?"

"Yes, it will."

"No, not 'it will,' but 'it is,'" cried Bestuzhev. "'Thy kingdom come,' that's at the beginning, and at the end, 'For Thine *is* the kingdom.' It is, it already is. . . . And do you know, Seryozha, when I was reading the Catechism in the Vassilkov market-place, there was a moment . . ."

"I know."

"You had it too? And at such a moment one wouldn't be afraid to die, would one?"

"No, Misha, one wouldn't."

"Well, read, read. . . . Give me your hand." Muravyov squeezed his hand through the crevice. Bestuzhev kissed it, then held it to his lips. He was going off to sleep and breathed on it, so that it seemed he was kissing it in his sleep too. Sometimes he started and gave a sob as small children do in their sleep, but he grew quieter and quieter, and at last was quite still and slept.

Muravyov, too, dozed off.

He was awakened by a terrible scream. He did not recognize Bestuzhev's voice.

"Oïe-oïe-oïe! What is it? What is it? What is it?" He stopped his ears not to hear. But soon all was quiet. He could only hear the clanking of the irons that were being put on Bestuzhev's feet, and Trofimov's soothing voice:

"A sleepy man, your honour, is like a little child, he is startled by everything. And when he wakes up, he laughs at it."

Muravyov went up to the wall that separated him from Golitsin, and said through the crevice:

"Have you read my 'Testament'?"

"Yes."

"Will you pass it on?"

"I will. Do you remember, Muravyov, you said to me there was some chief thing we did not know?"

"Yes, I remember."

"But isn't the chief thing what you say in the Testament—that Christ is King on earth as in heaven?"

"Yes, it is, but we do not know how to do it."

"And before we find out Russia will perish?"

"She won't perish,—Christ will save her." After a pause he added in a whisper:

"Christ and Somebody else."

"Who?" Golitsin wanted to ask, and did not, he felt one must not ask about this.

"Are you married, Golitsin?"

"Yes."

"What is your wife's name?"

"Marya Pavlovna."

"And what do you call her?"

"Márinka."

"Well, kiss Márinka from me. Good-bye. They are coming. God keep you!"

Golitsin heard the rattle of bolts and locks on the door of Muravyov's cell.

When the five were brought into the corridor, under the convoy of the Pavlovsky Grenadiers, they all kissed each other except Kahovsky. He stood on one side by himself, as stony as ever. Ryleyev looked at him, wanted to go up to him, but Kahovsky pushed him away with his eyes: "Go to the devil, you scoundrel!" Ryleyev smiled: "Never mind, he'll understand directly."

They went : Kahovsky in front, by himself, behind him Pestel and Ryleyev, arm in arm ; Muravyov and Bestuzhev, also arm in arm, brought up the rear.

As he went past the cells Ryleyev made the sign of the cross over them and said in a singing, as it were calling voice :

" Forgive, brothers, and farewell ! "

Hearing the sound of steps, the clatter of chains and Ryleyev's voice, Golitsin rushed to the peephole in the door and cried to the warder :

" Lift it ! "

The warder lifted the curtain, Golitsin looked out. He saw Muravyov's face. Muravyov smiled at him, as though asking, " Will you pass it on ? "—" I will," Golitsin answered, also with a smile.

He went to the window and he saw on the Kronverk rampart, against the dull-red background of the dawn, two black posts with a cross-beam and five ropes.

VIII

ALL those who were sentenced for the affair of the Fourteenth—there were 116 of them, not counting the five sentenced to death—were led out to be " degraded." They were assembled in the square in front of the Mint, formed into detachments according to their profession, and led out from the fortress through the Petrovsky gates to the glacis of the Kronverk section, a big piece of waste land ; it had once been a dumping ground, and there were still heaps of refuse about.

The troops of the Guards Corps and Artillery with loaded guns formed a semicircle round the prisoners.

The dull sound of the drums did not disturb the stillness of the night. An executioner stood by each detachment and a fire was blazing. The sentence was read out, and the degrading began.

The condemned men were told to kneel down. The executioners tore off their uniforms, straps, epaulettes, orders and threw these into the fire. Their swords were broken on their heads. The swords had been partly hacked beforehand so that they would be easier to break, but some had not been hacked enough, and the prisoners fell under the blows. So did Golitsin when the executioner hit him on the head with his Kammer-junker's sword.

" If you hit me another time like this, you will kill me," he said to the executioner, getting up.

Then they were dressed in striped hospital dressing-gowns. There was no time to sort them out : short men had such long gowns that they trod on them, tall ones had them too short ; fat men had such narrow ones that they could hardly get them on. They were rigged out like clowns. At last they were taken back to the fortress.

As they walked past the Kronverk rampart, they whispered to one another, looking at the two posts with a cross-beam :

" What is this ? "

" Don't you know ? "

" It doesn't look a bit like the thing."

" Why, have you ever seen it ?

" No, I haven't."

" No one has, it is the first within our memory."

" The first, but I don't suppose it's the last."

" It is a simple thing to make, but our people couldn't manage even that : a German built it."

"They couldn't find a Russian hangman: had to send for a Lett or a Finn."

"And they say even he isn't up to much; perhaps he won't be able to manage."

"Kutuzov[1] will teach him, he is a good hand at it, got his training on Tsars' necks!"

They laughed, as people laugh with terror sometimes.

"And why are they dawdling? It was to be at two o'clock, and now it is past four."

"It was built at the Admiralty and brought here on six carts: five have arrived, but the sixth, the most important one, with the cross-beam, has got stuck somewhere. They are making a new one, that's why they are late."

"Nothing will happen. They only frighten us. It's a pretence! The messenger from the Tsar will come with a reprieve."

"There's some one galloping, do you see?"

"That's General Tchernyshov."

"Well, anyway, there will be a messenger."

And again they looked back at *the thing*.

"It looks like a swing."

"You had better try it."

"No, it is a scale, not a swing," said Golitsin. No one understood, but he thought, "Russia will be weighed on those scales."

Two generals galloped up to the posts on the rampart, Tchernyshov and Kutuzov. They were discussing the thickness of the ropes.

"They are too thin," said Tchernyshov.

[1] Kutuzov took part in the assassination of Paul I.—*Translator's Note.*

"No, they are not. The noose will slip all the tighter on thin ropes," argued Kutuzov.

"And what if they don't bear the weight?"

"Why, we tried them with sacks of sand—they bear eight poods."

"Have you tried it yourself?"

"Yes, I did."

"Well, your Excellency is a better judge," said Tchernyshov with a malignant smile. Kutuzov turned crimson—he understood the hint: if he knew how to strangle the Tsar, he would be able to deal with the tsaricides too.

"Hey, you there, did you remember to bring some grease?" he shouted to the hangman.

"*Meene-vane, meene-vane*," muttered the Finn, pointing to a pot of grease.

"Why, he doesn't even speak Russian," said Tchernyshov, looking at the hangman through a lorgnette.

The hangman was a man of about forty, fair and snub-nosed, somewhat like the Emperor Paul I. He looked surprised and bewildered, as though only half awake.

"The dolt! What clumsy hands! Mind he doesn't make a mess of it. Wherever did you pick up such a fool?"

"And why didn't you find a clever one?" Kutuzov snapped back, riding away.

At that moment the five men condemned to death were coming out of the fortress gates. In the gates was a small door with a high threshold. Their feet were weighed down by the chains and they had difficulty in stepping over it. Pestel was so weak that the escort had to lift him over.

When they got on to the rampart and walked past the gallows he looked at it and said :

"*C'est trop.* They might at least have shot us." He had not known till the last moment that they were going to be hanged.

From the rampart they saw a handful of people in the Troitsky Square. No one in the town knew where the execution was to be : some said on the Volkovo field, others—in the Senate Square. The people looked on in silence, surprised : they had lost the habit of executions. Some were sorry, sighed, crossed themselves. But hardly anyone knew who was being executed, and what for ; they thought the men were robbers or false coiners.

"*Il n'est pas bien nombreux, notre public,*" Pestel observed with a smile.

At the last moment something was not ready again, and Tchernyshov and Kutuzov nearly quarrelled.

The condemned men were told to sit down on the grass. They sat in the same order as they walked : Ryleyev by Pestel, Muravyov by Bestuzhev, and Kahovsky alone, a little way apart.

Without looking at Kahovsky, Ryleyev felt that Kahovsky was looking at him with his stony stare ; it seemed that if only they were left alone for a minute Kahovsky would rush at him and strangle him. A heavy weight was oppressing Ryleyev ; it was as though huge blocks of stone were falling upon him, and he was no longer throwing them back like rubber balls as a man on a small planet would do ; they oppressed him with a terrible weight.

"A queer cap. I suppose he isn't Russian," said Pestel, pointing to the hangman's leather triangular cap.

" A Finn, I expect," answered Ryleyev.

" But his shirt is red. *C'est le gout national*, they make hangmen wear red," continued Pestel. He paused and then said, pointing to the hangman's assistant : " And this small one looks like a monkey."

" Like Nikolay Ivanovitch Gretch," Ryleyev remarked with a smile.

" Which Gretch ? "

" The writer."

" Ah, yes, Gretch and Bulgarin."

Pestel paused again, yawned and said :

" Tchernyshov hasn't painted his face."

" It's too early, he hasn't had time to smarten himself up," Ryleyev explained.

" And what are the bonfires for ? "

" At the degrading they were burning the uniforms."

" Look, a band." Pestel pointed to the military band standing behind the gallows in front of the squadron of the Pavlovsky Grenadier Guards. " Will they hang us to music, then ? "

" I suppose so "

And so they talked of trifles all the time. Only once Ryleyev asked about the *Russkaya Pravda*, but instead of answering, Pestel merely waved his hand.

Bestuzhev, small, thin, with ruffled reddish hair, a childish freckled face and eyes that were not frightened but merely surprised, looked like a little boy who is expecting to be punished but may perhaps be forgiven. He was breathing rapidly as though he were going uphill ; sometimes he started and gave a little sob as he had done that night in sleep ; it seemed he might burst into tears any moment or again scream in an unnatural voice, " Oïe-oïe-oïe ! What is it ? What is it ? " But he glanced at Muravyov and subsided again, merely

asking with his eyes: "When is the messenger coming?"

"Directly," Muravyov answered, also without speaking, and stroked his head with a smile.

Father Pyotr came up to them with a cross. They got up.

"Is it time?" asked Pestel.

"No, they'll tell us," answered Ryleyev.

Bestuzhev looked at Father Pyotr as though wanting to ask him too about the messenger. But Father Pyotr turned away from him, looking almost as distracted as Bestuzhev himself. He took out a handkerchief and wiped the perspiration off his face.

"You won't forget about the handkerchief, will you?" Ryleyev reminded him about the Tsar's handkerchief.

"No, no, I won't, Kondraty Fyodorovitch, don't you trouble. . . . Well, what are they about . . . Good heavens!" said Father Pyotr in a flurry, looking round. Perhaps he was still waiting for the messenger or wishing for the end to come soon. He went up to the chief of police, Tchihachov, who was standing by the gallows and giving the last directions. They whispered together and Father Pyotr went back to the condemned men.

"Well, my friends . . ." he raised the cross, wanted to say something, and could not.

"You are sending us off like malefactors, Father Pyotr," Muravyov said for him.

"Yes, yes, like malefactors," faltered Myslovsky, and then suddenly he looked Muravyov straight in the eyes and exclaimed solemnly: "Verily I say unto thee: today shalt thou be with Me in paradise!"

Muravyov knelt, crossed himself and said:

"God save Russia! God save Russia! God save Russia!"

He bent down, kissed the earth and then the cross.

Bestuzhev imitated all his movements like a shadow, but he was evidently no longer conscious of what he was doing.

Pestel went up to the cross and said:

"Though I am not Orthodox, I beg you, Father Pyotr, to bless me too for the long journey."

He knelt down also; slowly and heavily, as though in his sleep, he raised his hand, crossed himself and kissed the cross.

Ryleyev came after him, still conscious of Kahovsky's stony oppressive stare.

Kahovsky was standing on one side and did not approach Father Pyotr. The priest went up to him himself. Kahovsky knelt down slowly, as it were reluctantly, slowly crossed himself and kissed the cross. Then suddenly he jumped up and embraced Father Pyotr, squeezing his neck so tightly that it seemed he would choke him.

Letting him go out of his embrace, he glanced at Ryleyev. Their eyes met. "He won't understand," thought Ryleyev, and the terrible weight almost crushed him. But something stirred in Kahovsky's stony face. He rushed to Ryleyev and embraced him, sobbing:

"Kondrat . . . brother . . . Kondrat . . . I . . . Forgive me, Kondrat. . . . Together? Together?" he faltered through his tears.

"Petya darling . . . I knew it . . . Together, together!" answered Ryleyev, sobbing too.

The chief of police Tchihachov came up and read the sentence. It ended thus:

"For their heinous crimes these felons are to be hanged."

They put on the condemned long white shirt-shrouds reaching to the ground and tied with straps under the neck, just below the elbows and round the ankles, so that their bodies were as though in swaddling clothes. White hoods were put on their heads, and round their necks square pieces of black leather, on which the criminal's name and the word "Tsaricide" were written. The names of Ryleyev and Kahovsky got mixed up. Tchihachov noticed the mistake and ordered the leathers to be changed. To every one else this appeared a grim jest, but to them it was a tender caress of death.

Kutuzov made a sign. The band struck. The condemned men were led to the gallows. It stood on a platform to which they had to mount by a gently sloping approach. They walked slowly, for they could only take very small steps with feet that were both shackled and tied. The escort supported and pushed them from behind.

Meanwhile the hangmen were smearing the ropes with grease. An old sergeant of grenadiers who stood at the end of the row, next to the gallows, kept glancing at the hangmen and frowning. He knew how to hang people: during Suvarov's campaigns he had hanged about a dozen Jewish spies in Poland. He saw that the ropes were wet with the night's dew: the grease would not stick to them, and they would be stiff; the noose would be loose and might slip off.

The five got on to the platform and stood in a row, facing Troitsky Square. They stood in the following order, from right to left: Pestel, Ryleyev, Muravyov, Bestuzhev, Kahovsky.

The hangman was putting the halters round their necks. At that moment all their faces had the same expression : calm and as it were thoughtful.

When the halter was already round Pestel's neck a thought passed over his sleepy face. If it could have been put into words, it would have been this : " Am I dying for nothing, or for something ? I shall know directly."

The hoods were lowered over their faces.

" Good heavens, whatever is this for ? " said Ryleyev. It seemed to him that not only the hangman's fingers but even his shiny yellow face reeked of grease. The terrible weight fell upon him again. But Kahovsky smiled at him, and he threw off this last weight as though it were a light rubber ball.

Muravyov, too, smiled at Bestuzhev : " Will the messenger come ? "—" Yes, he will."

The hangman ran off the platform.

" Ready ? " shouted Kutuzov.

" Ready," answered the hangman's assistant.

The Finn pulled with all his might at the iron ring in a round opening at the side of the platform. The plank under the condemned men's feet sank down like a trap-door, and the bodies hung.

" Oo-ooh," echoed dully from the group of people in Troitsky Square down to the troops round the gallows : the whole crowd groaned as the earth does when a weight falls upon it. They did not understand at once : there had been five men hanging, but only two were left.

" Damnation ! What's the matter ? " cried Kutuzov, his face all awry. He spurred his horse and galloped up to the spot.

Father Pyotr dropped the cross out of his hands, ran

up to the platform and glanced first into the hole and then at the three empty halters. He understood : they had fallen through.

The old sergeant was right : the nooses did not tighten properly on the wet ropes, and slipped off the necks. Two were hanging—Pestel and Bestuzhev, and three had fallen—Kahovsky, Ryleyev, Muravyov.

White, terrible, they were stirring in their white shrouds down in the black hole.

The hoods had fallen off their faces. Ryleyev's face was stained with blood. Kahovsky was groaning with pain. But he glanced at Ryleyev and again they smiled at one another : " Together ? "—" Together."

Muravyov was almost unconscious, but as a man who is fast asleep and wakes up with a terrible effort, so he came to himself, opened his eyes and looked up ; he saw Bestuzhev was hanging : he knew him by his small size. " Well, thank God," he thought, " a messenger from another King has already called him to life ! " But he forgot to think that he himself would just be going to die not a second but a third death. He closed his eyes again and rested with the last thought : " Ippolit. . . mother."

The band stopped. In the stillness shrill cries and moans came from Troitsky Square : a woman was struggling in a fit. And again as before a shudder of horror passed like a dull echo through the whole crowd from the gallows to the Square.

It seemed, one moment more, and the people would be able to endure it no longer : they would rush and kill the hangmen and sweep the gallows away.

" Hang them ! Hang them ! Hang them quick ! " cried Kutuzov. " Hey, the band ! "

The band struck again. The three men who had fallen were pulled out from the hole. They could no longer walk up the slope : they were carried. The plank was lifted up once more. Pestel reached it with his feet and revived : a fresh convulsion ran through his stiffened body. Bestuzhev was too short to reach the plank : he alone escaped a second death.

The halters were put on again and the plank lowered. This time all were hanged properly.

It was about six in the morning. The sun was rising in the mist, dull-red as it had been all those days. Right against the sun, between two black posts, on five ropes hung five stiff, long motionless bodies, swathed in white. And the dull blood-red sun did not stain with blood their white shrouds.

IX

ON the eve of the execution the Tsar went, or, as some said, " ran away " to Tsarskoe Selo. Every quarter of an hour couriers were sent there, straight from the place of the execution. By the last courier Kutuzov sent the report :

" The execution was carried out in due order and quiet both on the part of the troops and of the spectators, of which there were not many. Owing to the inexperience of our hangmen and the lack of skill in making gallows, at the first attempt three men, namely Ryleyev, Kahovsky and Muravyov, fell down, but were soon hanged again and received the death they deserved, of which with loyal obedience I inform your Majesty."

On the same day General Dibitch, the chief of the General Staff, wrote to the Tsar :

"The courier is bringing your Majesty General Kutuzov's report about the sentence on the scoundrels being carried out. The troops behaved with dignity, and the felons with the baseness which we have seen from the beginning."

"I thank God that everything has ended safely," the Tsar wrote to Dibitch. "I knew well that the heroes of the Fourteenth would not show on this occasion more courage than one would expect. I advise you, my dear, to exercise extreme caution the whole day."

On July 14th there was a thanksgiving service in the Senate Square. The troops surrounded a movable church fixed up by the monument of Peter, in the very place where the rebels stood on December 14th. The Metropolitan with the clergy walked through the soldiers' ranks and sprinkled them with holy water.

The last litany was solemnly read out, every one kneeling :

"And we beseech our Lord and Saviour to accept the confession and the thanksgiving of His unworthy servants, for that He did vouchsafe to protect and deliver us from seditious tumults, aiming at the overthrow of the Orthodox faith and throne and the ruination of the Russian Empire."

"Their execution—the execution of Russia? No, it's a blow in the face. Well, they'll swallow it. Kahovsky was right : a vile country, a vile people. Russia will perish. . . . And perhaps there is nothing to perish. Russia does not exist, and never did. . . ."

This was what Golitsin thought, sitting in his new

cell in the Nevsky section to which he was transferred after the execution on July 13th. He knew that the execution had taken place—the gunner Shibaev had whispered it to him—but that was all. In the days immediately following the execution the prisoners were kept as strictly as in the first days of the confinement. They were not let out of their cells ; no conversation nor knocking was allowed ; the warders grew dumb again ; to all questions there was but one answer : " I do not know."

On the very day of the execution Podushkin secretly brought Golitsin a note from Márinka. Podushkin's daughter, Adelaïda Yegorovna, had persuaded her father to do it. The note had not been opened.

" My dear, it is a long time since I have written to you, not having the courage to do so and not wishing to give you the terrible news through strangers. On June 29th mother died. She had been ailing since January, but I did not expect the end to come so soon. I cannot get rid of the agonizing thought that I am the involuntary cause of this misfortune. There is no pain greater than remorse for not having sufficiently loved those who are no longer with us. But I had better not write about it : you will understand. And so now I am quite alone in the world, for although Foma Fomitch loves me as if I were his own daughter, and is ready to give his life for me, he is very old (he has aged dreadfully since grandmamma's death, and is now quite like a child), and is poor support for me. But don't be uneasy about me, my dear. I know now that when it is necessary one finds in oneself strength that one had never suspected. I never have and never will waver in my steadfast hope in the mercy of God and in the protection of the Queen of Heaven, our Defender, the

Invincible Shield, the Mother of all Sorrowful. Only now have I learnt how powerful is Her holy intercession. Every day I pray to Her with tears for you and for all of you, unhappy ones. I should like to write more about this, but do not know how. Forgive me for writing so badly. I lived through terrible days when I heard that the second division in which you are had been sentenced to death. But I knew I would not survive you and this alone strengthened me. You can imagine my joy when I learnt that capital punishment was commuted to penal servitude—and the still greater joy that we, the wives, will be allowed to follow our husbands. All these days Princess Trubetskoy and I—what a splendid woman she is !—have been working for it, and now have almost complete certainty that the permission will be granted. All I want is to be with you and to share your trouble. Here again I do not know how to say it. Do you remember how when you were ill and delirious you kept repeating 'Márinka, . . . little mother' . . ."

He could not go on reading ; the letter dropped out of his hands. "Why should such a letter come on such a day?" he thought. He did not know which feeling was stronger in him : joy or disgust at his joy. He remembered the most awful of all his thoughts, the one which nearly drove him mad at the Alexeyevsky ravelin : love was base ; love for the living, joy of the living was treason to the dead ; there was no love, no joy, there was nothing—only baseness and death, the death of the honourable and the baseness of the living.

On the evening of the next day, July 14th, Father Pyotr came to see him. As on that Palm Sunday when Golitsin had refused communion, he was holding

the chalice in his hands ; but from the way he was holding it one could see that the chalice was empty.

He avoided looking into Golitsin's eyes, and looked helpless and pitiful. But Golitsin did not pity him as Ryleyev had done. He looked at him long and maliciously from under his spectacles, and asked with a jeer :

" Well, Father Pyotr, did the messenger come ? It was all a pretence, eh ? "

Father Pyotr wanted to smile, but his face contorted into a grimace. He sat down, put the chalice to his lips, bit the edge with his teeth and wept, at first quietly, then louder and louder ; he put the chalice on the table, covered his face with his hands and broke into sobs.

" What an old woman ! " thought Golitsin, still looking at him silently and maliciously.

" Well, will you please tell me about it," he said when the priest subsided a little.

" I cannot, my dear. Some time later, but now I cannot."

" You could lead them to the execution and you cannot tell about it ! Tell me at once, this very minute ! " cried Golitsin menacingly.

Father Pyotr looked at him over-awed, wiped his eyes and began to tell his story, at first reluctantly and then with eagerness ; he evidently found a bitter comfort in it.

When he got to the point of how they fell down and were hanged again, he turned pale, covered his face with his hands once more and wept. And Golitsin laughed.

" A nice country, Russia ! They can't even hang one properly. Vile ! Vile ! Vile ! "

Father Pyotr suddenly stopped crying, uncovered his face and looked at Golitsin timidly.

"Who is vile?"

"Russia."

"What terrible things you say, prince."

"Oh? Do you feel it an insult to your fatherland? Never mind, you'll swallow it."

They were both silent.

The window of the cell looked over the Neva, facing west. The sun was setting. It was as red as it had been all those days, but it was not so dull: the smoky mist had partly cleared away. In the distance beyond the Neva the windows of the Winter Palace were glowing with a red glitter as though there were a fire within. The cell was also flooded with the red glow. While telling his story Father Pyotr had taken the chalice from the table and was still holding it in his hands. In the red light the golden cup sparkled with a dazzling brilliance, like another sun.

Golitsin glanced at it, went up to Father Pyotr, put his hand on his shoulder and said as menacingly as before:

"Do you understand now, why I did not want to communicate? Do you understand now?"

"Yes, I do," Father Pyotr whispered, and glancing at Golitsin saw that even in the red light his face was deadly pale.

They were silent again.

"Where have they been buried?" asked Golitsin.

"I don't know," answered Father Pyotr. "No one knows. Some say, right by the gallows, in a ditch with raw lime, some that it was at the cattle cemetery on the island Golodai, and others, that they were sewn up in

sacks to which stones were tied, put in a boat, taken out to sea and thrown into water."

"But I did say a requiem for them, sure enough," he added after a pause, smiling with simple-hearted cunning. "There was a parade to-day in the Senate Square, a thanksgiving service for the victory over sedition. The Square and the troops were sprinkled with holy water to cleanse them from blood—they are so afraid of blood! But I think not even the holy water will wash the blood away. His Eminence the Metropolitan celebrated the service, together with all the clergy. But I didn't go. My wife says, 'You take too many liberties, Father Pyotr! You will catch it from the bishop if you don't mind.' 'Well, what if I do catch it!' said I. I let the ikon of Our Lady of Kazan go with other priests, and instead of going myself, I put on black vestments and sung a requiem for the five newly-departed servants of God. 'With Thy saints, O Christ, rest the souls of Thy servants Sergey, Mihail, Pyotr, Pavel, Kondraty, where the righteous are at rest. Receive them into Thy peace, O Lord . . .' And He will receive them, of course He will!"

Suddenly he stood up and exclaimed solemnly: "I take the living God for my witness: they died like saints. Like ripe and ready berries they fell on the ground, and it was not earth that received them, but their Heavenly Father. Martyrs' crowns have been vouchsafed them, and these crowns shall not be taken from them till the end of time. Glory be to the Lord God! Amen."

Again, as on that Palm Sunday, Golitsin knelt down and said:

"Bless me, Father Pyotr."

The priest raised his hand.

" No, with the chalice."

" In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost," Father Pyotr blessed Golitsin, touching his forehead, breast and shoulders with the cup, and then let him kiss it. When Golitsin put his lips to it a crimson ray of the sun fell upon the gold, and the chalice seemed filled with blood.

Father Pyotr embraced him in silence, and went to the door.

" Wait a minute," said Golitsin, unbuttoned his collar, and pulled out from the breast of his shirt a bundle of papers, which he gave to Father Pyotr.

" What is this ? " asked the priest.

" Muravyov's notes, his ' Testament to Russia.' He told me to give it to you. Will you take care of it ? "

" I will."

He embraced him once more, and went out.

For a long time Golitsin sat still, and without noticing the tears that flowed down his face, looked on the setting sun, the heavenly chalice filled with blood. Then he looked down and saw Márinka's letter on the table. He knew now why such a letter had come on a day like that.

He remembered Muravyov's words : " Kiss Márinka for me." He took the letter and kissed it, whispering :

" Márinka . . . mother ! "

He remembered how after seeing her in the garden of the Alexeyevsky ravelin he had kissed the earth : " Earth, earth, the Immaculate Mother ! " And he thought of Muravyov also kissing the earth at the last moment before the gallows. He remembered his whisper through the crack in the wall just before his death : " Russia will not perish—Christ will save her—Christ

and Somebody else." He had not known then Who—but now he knew.

A joy that was akin to terror pierced his soul like lightning. "Russia will be saved by the Mother."

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